

TWELVE SERMONS,

U P O N

The following SUBJECTS:

- | | |
|---|--|
| I. The Divinity of <i>Christ</i> . | VII. <i>Agur's</i> Request. |
| II. <i>Jeptab's</i> Vow. | VIII. Plain Truth. |
| III. The good <i>Samaritan</i> . | IX. Truth dissembled. |
| IV. A proper and an im-
proper Conformity to the
World. | X. The natural Desire of
long Life. |
| V. Prayer—what it is; and
what it is not. | XI. The Folly and Danger
of despising Religion. |
| VI. <i>Solomon's</i> Request. | XII. The Penitent upon
the Cross. |

By the Rev. ^K J. SMITH, M. A. ^(James)

Chaplain in-Ordinary to his MAJESTY.

L O N D O N:

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OF NATURAL HISTORY

AND MINERALOGY

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AND MINERALOGY



P R E F A C E.

I WAS advised by many kind Friends to delay the Publication of these Discourses a few Months longer; but the Opinion of some of my Subscribers corresponding with my own Ideas of Delicacy in in a Matter of this Kind—I hope that I have not done wrong in publishing them now.

I considered it as a Duty—to be so far *particular* in the Acknowledgment of *Obligations* upon *this Occasion*, as to print the Names of my Subscribers,

P R E F A C E.

Subscribers, whose Candour *after* Publication, will, I doubt not, prove *equal* to their Civility and Generosity *before*.

The first, eighth, and ninth Sermons, are partly taken from two eminent *French* Divines. They have, however, been preached before very distinguished Congregations, and it was particularly recommended to me to give them a Place in this printed Collection.

I may say of the Sermon upon the Divinity of *Christ* (what a late Writer says of his own religious Treatise) that it is “an Abstract only
“ — designed to raise a proper At-
“ tention, and to create a Desire, in
“ young

P R E F A C E.

“ young or doubting Persons, to
“ pursue the Subject — till the Mind
“ finds Reason to be satisfied in *that*
“ Certainty of Evidence the *whole*
“ produces,” on which this essential
Article of the christian Faith is
founded.

The Rest of the Discourses (except in Matters strictly doctrinal) are taken from Life rather than from *Books*—from *Observation* rather than from *Reading*. I have *endeavoured* to represent the World as it *now* is — to make all possible *Allowance* for Error and Indiscretion — to give every possible *Commendation* to Principles and Conduct, lovely and of good Report. In a Word; whatever

P R E F A C E.

ever Imperfections may be discovered in the following slender Performance, when examined with a critical Attention — I hope it will appear — that I (at least) *wish* Religion *well* — that I *wish* my Fellow-Mortals *well* — *wish* them to be happy *Here* — but at all Events to take Care that they become so *Hereafter*, through their *own best* Endeavours, *perfected* by the Merits and Mediation of *Jesus Christ*.

LONDON, MAY 6, 1776.

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C O N T E N T S.

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E R R A T A.

Page 90, line 11, for *Serenity* read *Sincerity*.
108, — 19, for *Vine* read *Pine*.
152, — 15, for *desirest* read *desiredst*.
174, — 6, for *Purity* read *Parity*.

S E R M O N I.

UPON THE

DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

B

3 0 1 1 1 0 3

2 1 1 1 1 1 1

1 1 1 1 1 1 1

S E R M O N I.

JOHN i. 1, 2.

*In the Beginning was the Word, and the
Word was with God, and the Word was
God.*

The same was in the Beginning with God.

I Shall, with, I hope, a becoming Re-
verence to so sacred a Subject, presume,
in the ensuing Sermon, to speak of the
Divinity of Jesus Christ; wishing hereby to
prove from the plain Authorities of Scripture,
and from clear unprejudiced Reasoning—that
our Lord was, from the Glory, and the

4 S E R M O N I.

very Spirit and Effence of his Ministry upon Earth, manifestly God.

The first shining Part of our Lord's Ministry is — that he was foretold and promised to Men almost ever since the World existed. Scarcely had *Adam* fallen, but is shewed him (tho' at a great Distance) this kind Recoverer. In succeeding Ages God appeared, as it were, to be unmindful of any Thing else, but to prepare Men for the Arrival of this Saviour. In short our Lord was foretold by all People — declared for Four Thousand Years by a long Chain of Prophets — figured out by all the Ceremonies of the Law — and wished for by the Just of all Ages. Neither was all this for the Sake of some particular Event only: He was to be the Resource of a condemned World — A Law-giver of divers People — the Light of Nations — the Salvation of *Israel*. But what a Snare for the Religion of all Times — if Preparations so great and important specified

S E R M O N I. 5

a Creature merely human — of those Times especially, when the Credulity of the World so easily suffered Men of uncommon Notions or uncommon Abilities — to rank as Gods.

John the Baptist — in Order to prevent Idolatry in his Nation — is ever heard to say — I am not he whom you expect. Our Lord, on the Contrary, whom Four Thousand Years of Figures and Prophecies had acknowledged — at Length comes in great Virtue and Power. He performs Miracles which no other Person ever did before him, and instead of preventing the People from worshipping him — he declares himself to be equal with God, and suffers the World to render divine Honours to him. If this was an idolatrous Worship, Mankind seem to be by no Means responsible for it.

In the Ages before the Coming of our Lord — there appeared many very extraordinary Men, whom the Almighty seemed to have made, as it were, Confidants of his

6 S E R M O N I.

Virtue and his Power : And yet when we attend to this Matter closely, we find that all these extraordinary Men carried about them Marks of Dependence and Weakness : Our Lord, on the Contrary, performs the most surprising Miracles with a Facility all puissant — and with a Sovereignty wholly independent.

Again, how glorious are the Circumstances before unheard of in any one — which compose the Course of our Lord's mortal Life ! Conceived by the Operation of the Holy Ghost, he is born of a pure Virgin. Scarcely is he born, but celestial Legions fill the Air with Songs of Triumph, and assure us that this Birth renders to God his Glory, and Peace to Men. A little afterwards, a new Star conducts to his Cradle wise Men from the East : A just and an holy Woman announces his future Glory : The Doctors being assembled together behold, with Astonishment, his Infancy more wise and understanding

S E R M O N I. 7

standing than the Wisdom and Experience
of old Age.

In Proportion as he advances in Years,
his Glory discovers itself the more. *John*
Baptist humbles himself before him—Heaven
opens itself upon his Head — the affrighted
Devils cannot abide his Presence — the Fa-
ther of Heaven declares that he is his well-
beloved Son, and proposes him as the living
and eternal Law, in commanding Mankind
to listen to him.

If from *Tabor* we pass over to *Mount Cal-
vary* — the Place where all the Reproaches
and Cruelties exercised upon our Lord ex-
hausted themselves; all Nature in confu-
sion acknowledges him even here as it's Au-
thor, and confesses his Divinity. He arises
from his Grave three Days after, not by
Means of any foreign Help, or that he
might die again; but by his own Power,
and that he might be in Possession henceforth
of a Life immortal. To finally close the

§ S E R M O N I.

Scene, our Lord ascendeth into Heaven. It is not a Chariot of Fire that conveys him thither, in the Twinkling of an Eye — he raises himself with Majesty — the Angels come to meet him, and promise him a second Appearance upon Earth, when he shall be encompassed with Glory and Immortality.

In Footsteps like these who should not gladly trace out the God of Heaven? In him, who after having conversed with Men, in order to recover them from their Wanderings and their Misery, left them and their World, and renewed the Possession of his heavenly Glory. Surely, the exceedingly great Lustre of our Lord's Ministry would unavoidably be to us an Occasion of Idolatry, if he was not more than mere Man. As also would the very Spirit and Effence of his Ministry be an unavoidable Snare to our Innocence.

No one has ever yet denied that Jesus Christ was an holy Man. What Man indeed
ever

S E R M O N I. 9

ever appeared upon Earth, in whom all People remarked so strong Characters of Innocence and Sanctity? I might say, so great Indifference for the World, so great Love for Virtue, so great Zeal for the Glory of God, so great Ardour for the Salvation of Mankind? We may add to all this, the total Exemption of those Weaknesses, which we know to be inseparable from mere human Natures. Now if Jesus Christ be thus holy, he must be God — He must needs be such, as to the Doctrine which he bequeathed to us, whether we consider it as regarding his almighty Father or ourselves.

If Christ is nothing but a simple Embassador from God — he is not come but to shew to Nations an *idolatrous Unity* of the *divine Essence*. In the next Place, our Lord must have made use of evil Means for the Discharge of his Ministry. *Moses* and the Prophets, charged with a similar Mission, never ceased to publish that the Lord Almighty is
one,

one, without ever making a Comparison between themselves and the supreme Being: Whereas Christ seldom ceases to equal himself with his Father. — He says that he is descended from Heaven, and taken from the Bosom of God — that he existed before all Things — that the Father and himself are one. In every Thing indeed he compares himself with the great Sovereign of all Worlds. The *Jews* murmur and reproach him for these Expressions. So far from denying them, he confirms them all in the Midst of ~~Reproaches~~, and does this too in a Language affronting and impious, if his Equality and Comparison with his Father do not inform and justify him. Our Lord surely is not come upon the Earth (if he is merely Man) but to offend the *Jews principally*, in giving them an Opportunity at least of believing that he compares himself with the most High: He is not come but to seduce the *Nations*, in causing them to worship him
after

after his Death — He is not come but to disperse a fresh Darkneſs throughout the Univerſe. All thoſe great Advantages which the World has been promiſed to derive from the Miniſtry of Jeſus Chriſt do, in this Caſe, center themſelves in ſeeing Mankind plunged into a new Kind of Idolatry, and all the future Magnificence of the Goſpel ſo ſtrongly foretold by the Prophets — muſt finally be ſeen to have only tended to form and encourage that dangerous Sect of *Socinians*. But ſeeing the Manner in which he ſpeaks of his Father, the Equality which he aſſumes upon moſt Occaſions with his Father — this neceſſarily eſtabliſhes the Glory of his eternal Original.

Suppoſe we next conſider our Lord's Doctrine, with Regard to Men. This too muſt needs eſtabliſh at leaſt the *Verity* of his *divine* Birth. What Wiſdom, what Sanctity, what plain Sublimity in ſuch his Doctrine! Every Thing there is worthy of Reaſon, and
of

12 S E R M O N I.

of the most profound Philosophy: Every Thing there is proportioned to the Misery, and at the same Time to the Excellency, of Man. Remark those Duties of Love and mutual Dependence which he requires of Men one towards another. He enjoins us also to love him — to seek in him our Happiness — to refer to him ourselves and our Actions in like Manner as he teaches us to refer to his Father. But if he be not God, his Doctrine so divine, so admired even by Heathens — is nothing more than an horrid Mixture of Impiety, of Pride, and Folly; seeing he himself, being nothing but a mere Man, is desirous of usurping the Place of God in our Hearts. Nay more — whilst the true God appeared to be contented with the Sacrifices of Bulls and of Goats — Christ for himself is desirous that we sacrifice even our own Lives; that we give up ourselves to Death and Martyrdom for the Glory of his Name. But if he be not the Author of our
Lives,

S E R M O N I. 13

Lives, what Right can he have to require them at our Hands? His Religion is then a Religion of Blood and Barbarity only — the generous Martyrs of his Religion have then proved themselves only Cowards and Fanatics; and the Defenders of Justice and of the Glory of Christ's Divinity, only Tyrants and Persecutors. Can the Ear of Man listen to these Blasphemies without Horror?

I cannot close this important Subject without begging your Attention a little longer, whilst we consider the Spirit of our Lord's Ministry in those Graces and Blessings which the Universe has received from him. He declares that he is come to deliver all Men from eternal Death. He makes us from Enemies become the Children of God — He opens Heaven to us, and assures us, (upon easy Conditions) of a final, certain Possession thereof: He nourishes us from his own Body — he washes us from our Sins, in applying to us the Price of his own
Blood:

14 S E R M O N 12

Blood: In a Word, he calls himself our Way, our Truth, our Life, our Redemption. But as a mere Man, can he possibly be the Source of so great Graces and Benefits to other Men? Or is it not to be feared that as a Man becoming so useful and necessary to Mankind, he is become, at Length, their Idol?

See then to what impious and dangerous Lengths Infidelity is capable of carrying us. I hope that this is a Character applicable to none amongst us. And indeed mere Points of Faith should, perhaps, constitute but a small Part of Preaching; as every Preacher in a christian Land may, with Reason, in general conclude — that he has no Hearers, but what are Believers. Sometimes, however, it may be both useful and seasonable to treat of the Doctrines of Faith, especially when, as in the present Discourse, we can mix them with the equally important Doctrines of Love and Obedience. I will only
beg

S E R M O N I 15

beg Leave to add this Argument in Opposi-
 tion to Incredulity — that if it is an Error
 to believe that Jesus Christ is God, — it is
 an Error which was born with the Christian
 Church — it is an Error which has raised the
 whole Edifice — it is an Error which has
 formed so many Martyrs — it is an Error
 which has, in a Manner, converted the
 whole Universe. And ever let us conclude,
 that Piety and Reverence towards this our
 Saviour both God and Man — is the deep
 Spirit of our Religion — that nothing is solid
 or permanent but what we build upon this
 Foundation: And the principal Homage
 which our Lord requires of us is — that his
 Way be the Model of our own, so that at
 Length being conformed to a Resemblance
 of him here, we may finally be of the Num-
 ber of those who shall be Partakers of his
 eternal Glory, To whom with the Father
 and the holy Spirit — three Persons but
 one

16 S E R M O N I.

one God—be ascribed all Honour and Power, Might, Majesty, and Dominion—now and for evermore. Amen.

S E R-

S E R M O N II.

U P O N

J E P T H A H ' s V O W .

P R E A C H E D

Before the UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE,
on SUNDAY, MARCH, 20, 1774.

S E R M O N II.

J U D G E S xi. 30. first Part.

And Jephthah vowed a Vow unto the Lord.

THE Words of his Vow were these:
“ If thou shalt without Fail—deliver the Children of *Ammon* into mine Hands; then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the Doors of my House to meet me when I return in Peace from the Children of *Ammon* shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a Burnt-Offering.” On his Return, after the completest Victory to his own House at *Mizpeh*—behold, his Daughter came out to meet
C 2 him,

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him, and she was his only Child. This is a Scene which must needs awaken our tender—humane Feelings, and prepare us for the Exercise of all imaginable Compassion towards the afflicted Parties.

Picture to yourselves a Man returning on the Wings of Victory—having totally subdued an Enemy who had created so great Fear in those who had sent for this Deliverer from a Country—whither they had most unjustly banished him. Fancy to yourselves a Man thus returning not only with Victory in his Hands, but also with Gratitude in his Soul to that Almighty Arm which had wrought Success. Suppose him too within Sight of his own House, where he expected to receive the Congratulations of his nearest Friends—to impart to them likewise in Return, some of his overflowing Joy: In particular you are to suppose that he had an amiable and a dutiful Daughter to meet on this Occasion, the only Child of his,

his fond, parental Bosom. Such was *Jepthab's* Situation! And had it not been for that rash and inconsiderate Vow which he made before his Conquest; we might have followed him into his House, and have fancied every Thing that was joyful and happy. But through Means of this fatal Resolution; we must make a Transition from a supposed Picture of perfect human Happiness; to one of (in Reality) perfect human Wretchedness. This very *Jepthab*, tho' Conquerer in the Field, is now on a sudden made a Coward; nay a Captive of, and by himself too. Lo! his Daughter came out first to meet him with Timbrels and with Dances. Here began his contrast — Wretchedness. At the Sight of her he rent his Cloaths, and wrapped up in Victory and Joy as he before was, he breaks out into a truly mournful Alas — *Alas, my Daughter, thou hast brought me very low,* and instead of viewing you as my first

Sharer of my Triumphs, *thou art even one*
of them who trouble me; for I have open-
ed my Mouth unto the Lord; and I cannot
go back. What such a Man must feel on
 an Occasion like this, would, I believe, be
 difficult to express. The very Rehearſal of
 the Matter to us who were not concerned in
 the History — is enough to melt Nature in-
 to all that can be ſuggeſted by a generous
 Pity, or a ſympathizing Heart. Thoſe
 may, probably, feel moſt, who bear the
 venerable Name of Parent, and the Story
 is not made the leſs affecting, by the ſur-
 prizing Reſignation of the fair Victim. Her
 Duty to her Father — her Readineſs to be
 given up — was a ſingular Proof ſurely of
 her Goodneſs — but this is a Circumſtance
 which muſt needs affect our Tenderneſs
 more, than if ſhe had broken out into In-
 vectives againſt a raſh Father, and had be-
 come an unwilling Sacrifice: Inſtead of
 which ſhe never once blames *Jeptbab* for
 the

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the Vow that he had made, but on the Contrary — urges the Fulfillment of it — so long as her Father was returned safe and successful, she was ready to suffer *according to what had proceeded out of his Mouth.*

This History being thus far laid open — I shall now venture to proceed to that Part of it which most of all belongs to us — the Consideration of the Vow itself: How far *Jeptbab* may be blamed or excused both in the making or in the fulfilling of it, which will naturally instruct us with Regard to Vows and Resolutions of our own.

In the Days of *Jeptbab* Vows were considered as lawful and binding, and few Things of Consequence were undertaken without some sacred Resolve. And when we read of the Slaughters and Troubles and Superstitions of those Days, and how deliberately Thousands were taken and slain — we must cease to judge of the Instance before us altogether as Christians. Yet make what Allowances we will — *Jeptbab* certainly

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went beyond the Customs and Errors even of his own mistaken Times. Sacrifices we know were wont to be made unto the Lord, and with very pious Intentions — but then it was the Incense of Rams or of Bullocks and of He-Goats, else of the tender and innocent Lamb. *Isaac*, it is true, was destined to be offered up, and by a Command from Heaven too — and Faith's prevailing in this Instance was justly imputed unto *Abraham* as Righteousness; yet the Trial seems to be thought too hard an one by the Lord for a *Man* to offer up his *only Son*: For when Faith had so far subdued the Powers of natural Affection as to bring *Abraham* with his Son to the Place where he was appointed to be slain — an Angel's Voice was heard from Heaven to cry out to *Abraham*, whose Hand was now stretched forth, and in Possession of the Knife prepared for the Slaughter — *lay not thine Hand upon the Lad.* Nay, a Sacrifice of this Sort was
not

not only supposed by the Lord to be most afflicting to a Parent, and indeed Injustice towards the Child — but we may collect I think — that as it was not permitted to be made in the Case of *Isaac* — so in future Times it should have been considered (independently of Nature) as an Act highly offensive in the Sight of God. As a *Jew* was prevented, and by Heaven too prevented — from committing it — a *Jew* should certainly have been taught, even *Jeptbab*, to have kept back his rash and inconsiderate Vow with Respect to a fellow Creature, and to have confined it to the Sacrifice of a Ram, And yet methinks our Candor is strongly addressed on the Side of *Jeptbab*. His Call to engage against the Children of *Ammon* was a very singular one. He was in Banishment, and invited to return even to fight for, and to rule over, those who banished him. Feel for a Man thus situated : And when he had actually received *the Spirit*

rit of the Lord as his Encourager and Supporter, fancy his religious Gratitude so much excited, as to make him think himself acting with a Duty equal to the Greatness of the Occasion, in offering up, in Case of Victory, one of his own Species, nay, one of his own Family—that he might have considered a common Sacrifice too small a Token of so extraordinary an Honour—Gratitude too limited for so great a Share of Mercy. This I say not in Justification of the Vow itself—for it cannot, it must not be countenanced—I mean it only as some Excuse for the unhappy Man who made it. Indeed *Jeptbab* seems to be situated in this Matter much like *St. Paul* touching a mistaken Conscience. His Persecutions no Christian must attempt to justify, tho' many Arguments may be urged in Favour of the misled Persecutor. So with Regard to *Jeptbab*, when we reflect upon what is recorded of his Disposition and Behaviour

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haviour and Principles in general — we cannot avoid in a great Measure excusing him as to the intentional Part of his Vow. Had it been made through Cruelty and Wantonness — had he meant to sport with the Life of a fellow Creature — he would doubtless have sought for such a Victim from Home — not at his own House, which contained Servants who had, probably, by their Fidelity, gained his Esteem — and besides these a Daughter, an only Child, who being a Person so nearly concerned in her Father's Joys and Successes was likeliest too to come out first to meet him. And thus it even happened: A Circumstance, which at the same Time that it convinces us of God's peculiar Disapprobation of the Oath itself — increases likewise our Pity towards the afflicted Father — who suffered, I suppose, all that Man could suffer on this Side the Grave. How must all his Glory which he had just acquired

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quired in the Field — be at once converted into Shame of the most tormenting Kind, and the Laurels of Victory — into a Crown of Thorns!

But leaving *Jeptbah* as far as regards his making this Vow, let us briefly touch upon the Impropriety of his fulfilling it.

That Men should pay a sacred Attention to Vows or Oaths, in which Religion or the Happiness of the World is concerned — is a Doctrine which every good and honest Man must needs inculcate: Nay, whatever we engage our Faith and Promise to, whether private Persons or Society be concerned — provided that such Engagement be founded on moral Virtue or moral Honesty; they are the worst of Men, who shrink back when it is in their Power to fulfil it. But when Men make Vows in themselves ridiculous — injurious to Society, and contrary to the Laws of Religion and Morality — let such Men, at the Time that they are about to
execute

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execute their Vow from a false Scruple of Conscience, or from a false Notion of Honour—rather afflict themselves that they had ever made such Vow at all, and forbear from fulfilling it—than after they have fulfilled it, to carry about them the perpetual Sense of Injury done to those who have suffered by it.

What are our Thoughts of the Tetrarch *Herod*—who for passing a few Hours in lawful Diffipation with *Herodias's* Daughter—was led to offer her so far as the Half of his Kingdom. Doubtless, he expected that her Request would have been a lucrative one, and when she asked the Baptist's Head in a Charger—he was sorry; yet so idle were his Notions of Honour (for Conscience could no Ways be here concerned) that he suffered his Humanity to fall so great a Sacrifice to it, as even to order that *John* should be beheaded. Now if *Herod* had done wisely, should he not have reprov'd *Herodias's* Daughter, at least with saying, “*thou knowest*”

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“*knowest not what thou askest,*” and have left himself to have reflected upon the Folly of Promises or Vows, which make Room for the Exercise of Cruelty and Wrong—without putting his own into Execution at the Expence of the Life of so good and valuable a Man as *John* the Baptist.

And let us instance next, on the Side of a scrupulous Conscience—in the Case of *Jeptabab*, who would surely have been a wiser, a happier, and a better Man, if he had permitted his Conscience to have dispensed with the *executive* Part of his Vow, and to have exercised it's *Stings* respecting the *making* of it *only*.

Vows and Resolutions like *Jeptabab's* are indeed unknown to our Times of Revelation, and true Worship which admits of no Sacrifice but that of a broken and a contrite Heart : Yet it is a very displeasing and a very faulty Custom amongst us to load our Consciences with idle Vows and rash Resolutions

tions—so as to lay the greatest Foundation of Unhappiness. In Things that are lovely and of good Report we oftentimes teach our Consciences to evade; but in Things trifling, wrong, or mischievous to the common Good—we easily become Slaves to this misguided Conscience, 'till at last, when we have shew'd ourselves (as we think) Men of firm Principles and Resolution by executing some mad Resolve—we make *ourselves* wretched, as well as *those*, to whom we have proved so cruelly and foolishly resolute. Vows and Resolutions are always made in some *Excess of Passion*; but seldom as *Jeptah's* was, in the *Spirit of Joy and Gratitude*. And besides, he meant his as a *Duty*, and as an *acceptable Service* to God—but the Vows and Resolutions of these Days *seldom* have a *good Tendency*: They are for the most Part founded on *Pique and Resentment*; and even upon a Supposition that we have received *Injury*—they generally take Care to bring us in *Debtor at last* even to the
 very

very *Party* which *first* offended—A Mortification as well as an Injustice this—which must needs be very painful to a Mind the least susceptible of Friendship, or real Greatness of Disposition; infomuch that I doubt not but there are many, let their Wealth and Situation be never so great and flattering—who are now wretched, merely through a strict Observance of some idle unguarded Resolution.

In a Word—this Life necessarily affords so many and so unexpected Changes—and the Futurity even of an Hour may cause so surprizing and so striking a Vicissitude in human Affairs—that a truly wise Man will make no other Resolution—than to be as just, as honest, as friendly, as religious, and as virtuous as he can. Vows of another Kind are oftentimes vicious—at best trifling and imprudent—and always to be discountenanced, as being naturally hurtful to Religion and Virtue and social Life.

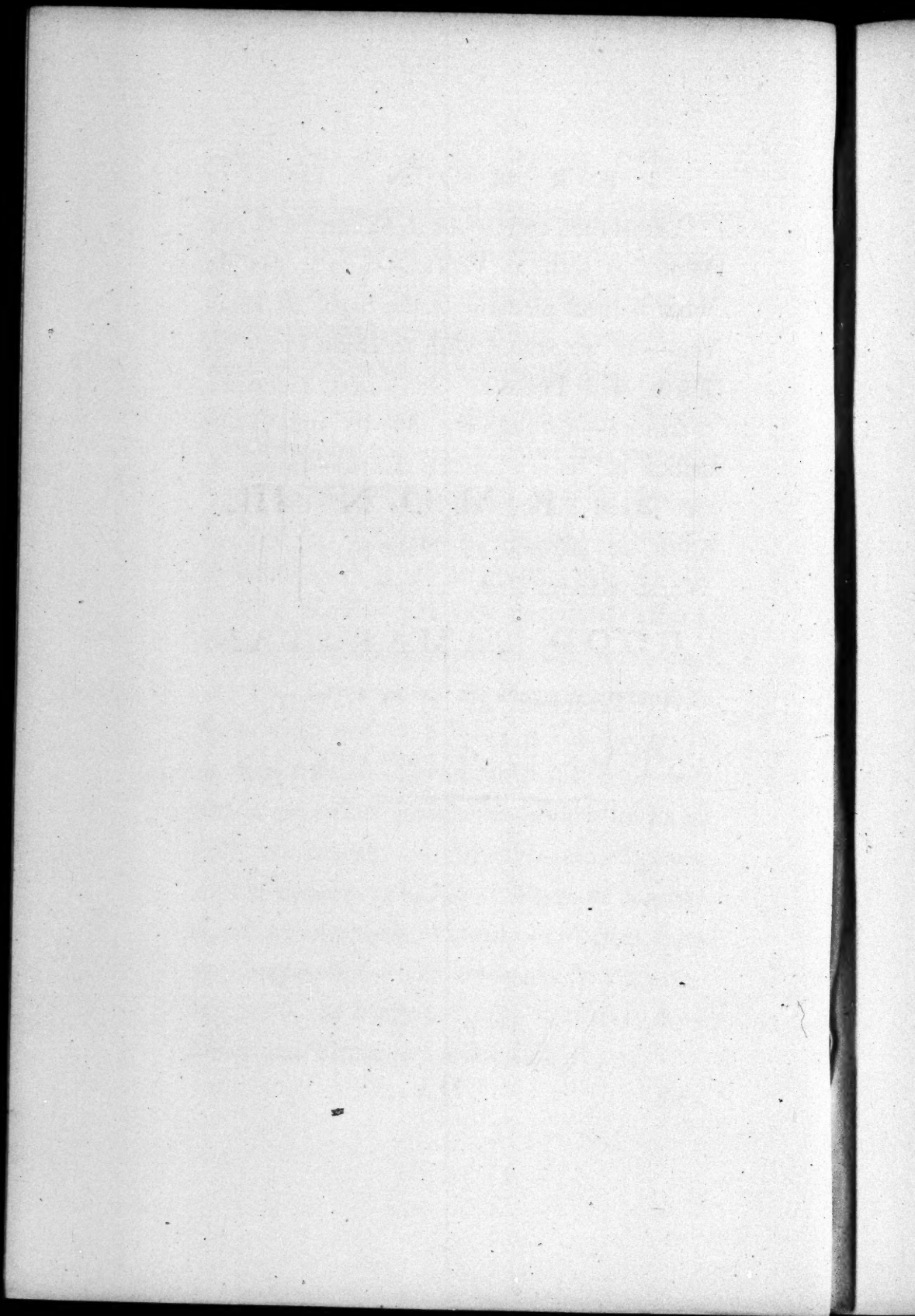
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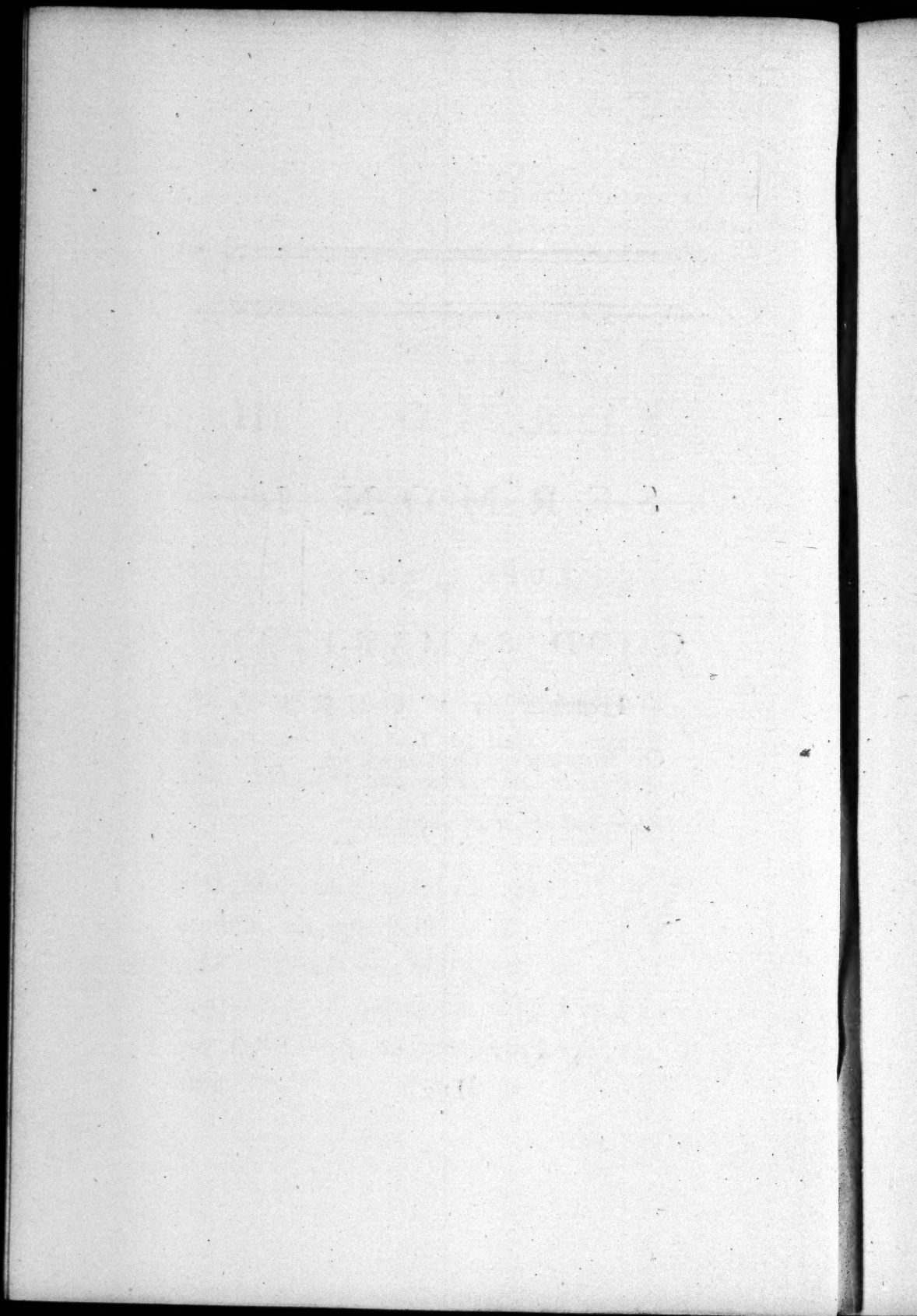
Let us then endeavour to be careful of our Words as well as Works—to say and do what is most pleasing in the Sight of Heaven—as we would wish to enjoy Peace on Earth, and Peace at God's right Hand for evermore—through the Merits and Intercession of Jesus Christ our Lord—to which two sacred Persons together with the Holy Spirit be ascribed all Honour and Glory, World without End. Amen.

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S E R M O N III.
UPON THE
GOOD SAMARITAN.
Preached at COURT,
ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1775.



S E R M O N III.

LUKE X. 36, 37.

Which now of these three thinkest thou was Neighbour unto him who fell amongst the Thieves? And he said, he that shewed Mercy on him: Then said Jesus unto him, go—and do thou likewise.

WE are doubtless born into this World to discharge the Offices of Friendship and Society: The very first Lesson which we learn is—that (under the Providence of the Deity) we

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owe our Existence and Support to the Favour of others, and brought up as we *all* are in a State of Dependence—and unable to subsist alone—we see continually the Necessity which we are under of cultivating a reciprocal Kindness and good Will amongst Men. Our nearest Relations are certainly our first and strongest Bonds of Endearment; yet this Union which begins with our nearest Kindred does not end there—but extends itself far and wide, and connects us (in a certain Degree) with our Neighbours, our Country, and all Mankind.

It may be said, perhaps, that the Conduct of the Priest and Levite (as recorded in this well known Narrative before us) exceeded the Practice of the most inhuman *Christians*, those only excepted who (as Murderers) delight in Blood; and that the Part of the Samaritan would be that of Christians in general, so particularly called upon as he was. Let it be acknowledged, indeed, that
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the Case of a Traveller robbed, stripped, wounded, and, as it were, expiring for Want of some kind Friend to cloath him, and to pour Oil into his Wounds—is such, as would affect even many *very wicked* Men. How candidly therefore should we judge in this Matter of the *honest* and *benevolent* Part of Mankind? Surely there is no Doubt to be made, but that these, under the same Circumstances, would, from natural human Feelings, as well as from Principles of Christianity, discover a Sympathy, and relieve with Compassion and Care, equal to what the Samaritan shewed. Bad as the World is, we are not wanting in Thousands of Instances, wherein the Samaritan has been fully equalled.

I cannot, it is true, avoid remarking, that there are to be found, I am afraid, but too many, who tho' they could not carry themselves in so relentless a Manner as the Priest and Levite did; and tho' they

should so far imitate the Samaritan, as to take a Fellow Creature, situated as the Traveller before us was, upon their own Beast to a Place which could afford him Comfort and Relief; yet I am afraid, I say, that we have but too many (even in this Christian Land) through Notions too contracted, and from a criminal Love of Money, who would leave this destitute Man, unwilling to exercise upon him the Generosity of a Samaritan in paying the *Expences* of *one Night* only, much less in speaking that most liberal and humane Language which the Samaritan delivered in the Morning to the Master of the House when he was obliged to leave the poor wounded Man: "Take Care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee." Hence we may learn, that the truly good Man, or he who wishes to imitate the good Samaritan, must exercise his Mercy (according to his Opportunities and Abilities) as well

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well, when *Expences attend* such Acts of Mercy, as when *they do not*.

But we have before observed, that no *Christians* could act the Part of the Priest and Levite—those only excepted, who (as Murderers) delight in Blood: And I really believe and hope that this Observation will stand good. Still, tho' *Christians* would not suffer their Bigotry and Prejudices thus far to get the better of their natural Feelings even as *Men*, much more of their *indispensible* Duty as *Christians*; yet every Denomination amongst us have Bigotry and Prejudices too weak and even too criminal, to render the Behaviour of the Priest and Levite wholly inapplicable to ourselves. Every Nation, and every religious Profession amongst us—have hereditary Notions and contracted Opinions, which border but too much upon the Presumption and Ignorance and Obstinacy, always so conspicuous in the *Jewish* Heart. It was doubtless the
Design

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Design and Employment of our Divine Lord and Master to rectify all Disorders—to remove every little narrow Prejudice which Humanity was prone to: For which Purpose he practised in his own Life—a Scheme of Benevolence as extensive as the Globe: “This *universal* Benevolence our Lord “makes the *Perfection* of Religion, and “the *Perfection* of Religion must needs be “the *Perfection* of *human Nature*.”

Should indeed two Objects (equally circumstanced in Danger and Distress) present themselves to our Mercy—the one a *good*—the other a *bad* Man; or the one our *Friend* or *Acquaintance*—the other our *Enemy* or *no Acquaintance*; (if Ability be not afforded us to assist both) it seems to be the Voice of Justice as well as of Nature, and by no Means contrary to a Spirit of *universal* Benevolence—that we (in this Case) bestow our Succour and Assistance upon the *good* Man, or upon him whom we call our *Friend* or *Acquaintance*. We may, and ought to wish
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the other *well*; and if we do this, we act, I think, quite *equal* to the Samaritan. But when no such *Choice* of miserable Objects is presented to our Mercy, and where no such *Comparison* of Characters or Connections can be made (as was the Case with the Samaritan respecting the poor wounded Traveller) our Business is not to regard the Country—the Religion—the Connections, or even the *Character* and *Morals* of the Object (supposing that his Wants are *urgent*, and the *Danger* of his Life *apparent*, as was also manifestly the Situation of this Traveller) but in Earnest, and without Hesitation, hasten as the Samaritan did—to administer every Relief in our Power which may be necessary to the Ease and Recovery of this Object of Compassion—whether known or unknown—our Friend or Enemy—a Jew, a Turk—or even an Infidel.

We shall do well to observe further, that no Station, however opulent or dignified, is
exempt

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exempt from Danger and Distress. We none of us know what a Day may bring forth, and our Misfortunes *oftentimes* arise where we *least expected* them. The Case of the poor Traveller in the Gospel may become in a great Measure the Case of the most independent amongst us. If so, what would the Dignity, or Fortune, or Friends of such an one *elsewhere* afford him? Unless some kind Samaritan should happen to pass by, he must (equally with the poorest Man) lie upon the Road weltering in his Blood, and perish and die alone. Reflect then that should *our own* Situation *require* it, how freely *we* should *receive* Mercy; and such a Reflection should forcibly instruct us, that should the Situation *of others* stand in *Need* of Mercy—we ought (if in our Power) as freely to *bestow* it. The very Notion that Man was made after the Image of God teaches that every Individual thus afflicted has a Right to be thus humanely dealt by;
and

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and when this is not the Case “ Contempt
“ is shewed both to the *Image* and to the
“ *divine Original*.”

But whilst we thus insist that Humanity
obliges us to assist our Brethren in their *ex-
treme* Necessities—let it not be supposed that
the great Precept of *Christian Charity* is *ri-
gorous* but in this Case *only*: Besides those
extreme Necessities, there are *Necessities*
grievous and more *frequent*. I am unwilling
to believe that there are any amongst the
Rich so void of Pity as to see a fellow Crea-
ture perish before their Eyes—to see him
reduced to the *last Distress*, and just ready
to *expire*—without taking Pains to preserve
Life in him, and to relieve him from such
Extremity: And let me remark also—that
it is a very rare Sight to behold amongst the
Poor any one in a Situation *altogether* so *mi-
serable* and *despairing*. We may therefore
safely conclude that it is our Duty not only
to attend to those *extraordinary* Necessities,
but

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but likewise—to *others* which are more *common* and *familiar* to us: For the Christian who forms a Resolution never to do good but in the *last* Necessities of the Poor—shews a Disposition in a most essential Point criminal, and directly opposite to the divine Law.

Again; *partial* Regards and *partial* Friendships may possibly become very faulty Errors. Let it be allowed thus far, that some are more linked to us as Brethren, and some of Necessity render themselves more endearing to us, than others; and Friendships of this Kind properly founded and properly conducted—bring with them great Sweets, and are productive of much real Virtue: Yet as God is the Father, and the *Jerusalem* above the Mother of us *all*—as we are all born of the same incorruptible Seed, and capable of being equal Partakers of the same divine Nature——as every Day makes some Separation amongst us, and as

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a few Years must make a total one—how reasonable the Duty, how tender the Request, that our Benevolence towards each other be extensive—if possible, that it be universal! And tho' some should prove unworthy of our Regard and Assistance, yet we may be assured that our Part is (agreeably to the Goodness of it) accepted with God. And indeed if we would wish to go and do as the wise Samaritan did, and as the Lawyer was commanded in the Text, we must effectually desire the Good and Happiness of the *whole* World, and do all in our Power *really* to promote it: We must be compassionate and friendly, not only in *Thought* and in *Word*, but as we have Opportunity—in *Deed* and in *Truth*: By Virtue of which godlike Disposition, there will exist in us an Heart felt Sympathy, which will shew itself by rejoicing with those that do rejoice, and mourning with them that mourn. This, in a Word, is that well instructed

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instructed Character which completeth all Things: The Christian Faith may support, and other christian Virtues may defend us during our earthly Pilgrimage—but this Conduct which so much resembles that of the good Samaritan—is what must *finally perfect* us, and is therefore the best adorned Pledge and Representation of eternal Glory.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N IV.

U P O N

A PROPER and an IMPROPER CONFORMITY
to the WORLD.

P R E A C H E D A T

QUEEN-STREET CHAPEL,

ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1775.

E



S E R M O N IV.

PROV. xxix. 25.

The Fear of Man bringeth a Snare.

IT must be allowed (with Solomon) that there is a Fear of Man which bringeth a Snare or Disgrace; but it seems to be equally clear and certain that there is a Fear of Man also which does *not* bring a Snare or Disgrace with it, but Honour and Happiness. Now it will be proper to prove this, before we enlarge upon the Text; before indeed we can say any Thing in perfect Favour of the Proverb which it contains.

A Desire to be spoken well of by the World in *general*—is both natural and laudable; therefore all *honourable* Methods to obtain *this* good Opinion are to be adopted and encouraged. Although the good Man, and the Man of Integrity is convinced that he has not deserved either public or private Censure; still, he cannot, should not always be without the *Fear* of it: Because this *prudent* Fear will teach him constantly to endeavour to keep off Slander from the *professed* Backbiter, and to prevent harsh Speeches falling from the Lips of those, who from a *weak* Head, and a Propensity to much *idle* Talking, are apt to cause great Mischief to their Friends and Acquaintance, as well as to Society in general. Unjust Censures can never make an *innocent* Man *truly* miserable; yet they are, doubtless, a very *considerable* Abatement to his *temporal* Happiness.

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To comply seasonably, and in Proportion to their Consequence, with the *innocent* Customs and Fashions of the World—is *also*, I think, highly commendable. Wholly to give up ourselves to them—must be a *faulty Compliance*; and wholly to despise them—must be a *faulty Singularity*. The Infirmities of human Nature, and the Difficulties of human Life—seem strongly to apologize for the World, in contriving and encouraging certain Pleasures and Amusements—intended merely as seasonable, indeed *necessary* Reliefs to Care and Solitude. This Indulgence, (as we have before hinted) must have its *Bounds*, to render it either lawful or becoming; but, surely, when exercised with Prudence and Discretion—the best of Men will do right even to *countenance* such occasional Intermissions, whether of *fancied* or *real* Joys—thus authorized by the *World* and their *own Innocence*.

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But let us now attend to still higher Injunctions in Favour of a *proper Conformity* to the World, or of a *laudable Fear* of Man. Masters, Parents, Princes, are to be *feared* or revered; and so is every Person (in a proportionable Degree) by those to whom he is *superiour*, or over whom he has any *just* and *lawful* Authority. However disgracefully such *Superiours* may fill their respective Characters—still it will be dutiful and prudent in every connected or dependent *Inferiour* to do *his* Part—to shew *Honour* to their *Stations*, though he might *justly* censure and condemn—the Men.

But if we suppose a becoming Fear or Reverence to be wanting in a Servant towards a *good* Master; how criminal the Ingratitude of *such* a Servant! And what are the Mischiefs which may not arise from *such* undutiful Conduct? If we suppose *this* Fear or Reverence to be wanting in a Child towards a *good* Parent; what is there that
is

is shameful which we may not expect from *such* a Child? Or what of Unhappiness which *such* a Parent may not tenderly experience? If we suppose this Fear or Reverence to be wanting in a Subject towards a *good* Prince; it becomes a hurtful, a destructive Principle indeed. And lastly, if we suppose *this* Fear or Reverence to be wanting towards a *good* Magistrate, or towards a *deserving* Superiour of any Kind; *that* wise *Distinction* of Station and Power so necessary to the well-being of Society — is hereby in Danger of being unhappily converted into *criminal* Discord and Confusion: In Time — the Fear of *God*, together with the *just* and *lawful* Fear of *Man*, will become equally exploded; and Men will act as if (literally speaking) they neither feared *them* who can *legally* kill the *Body only*, nor *him* who is able to destroy *both Body and Soul* in Hell. I wish indeed that the Period of Time may not be already arrived, when the *moral* Ties

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without the *legal* would lay but *little* Restraint upon the *Generality* of Mankind. Nay, can even Laws be formed *close enough* to repel the bold Assailants of our Rights and Happiness? Or do such Offenders in in *general* discover the *least* Sense of *Shame* or *Fear* — tho' compelled to undergo all the Pain and Ignominy, which the severest Sentence (within the Power of the Laws) can pronounce against them.

I must here repeat the melancholy Supposition — that the sacred Ties of Religion *alone* — would lay but *little* Restraint upon the Generality of Mankind! Happy, however, is that Man who conforms to the *excepted Few* — who thinks with *them*, that if the Christian Religion be of the *least* Importance, it is, doubtless, of the *greatest* — that if it be *any Thing at all*, it is certainly the *one Thing especially needful*. And thrice happy that Parent, or Master of a Family, who in this Respect both *feareth* and *imitateth* pious *Joshua*; who like him thus dareth to determine: *If it seem evil*
unto

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unto the irreligious Multitude so to do; yet as for me and my House—we will serve the Lord.

But let me hasten now to a Vindication of the Saying of *Solomon*—that the Fear of Man bringeth a Snare.

Altho' we have been so strongly recommending a proper Conformity to the World, as in Things of manifest Importance, so likewise in Things, which, tho' in Reality trifling, Custom and even Religion itself may (in a great Measure) authorize and recommend; yet if we pursue this Conformity to the World as an *ultimate* Part of our Duty and Happiness—our Conduct becomes defective in it's *main Spring*, and our Innocence, with our Happiness, is in certain Danger of being *finally* lost. As there is a Power *above* Man, so *that* Power should always be feared and revered in *Preference* to Man. Whenever the Commands of the *World* oppose the Commands of *God*; I should hope ever to sacrifice the *World* (and the Power and Happiness of a *thousand*

and such Worlds) to my *superiour* Attachments to my God, and to *that Life and Immortality* so manifestly brought to Light by the Gospel of his blessed Son.

And yet how many has a criminal Fear of Men or of the World prevailed upon to ridicule sacred Truths! But if to be impious is to be *fashionable*; who in his Senses will dare to *comply* with the *World*, in a Matter so affronting to his God and Saviour—so degrading to the human Nature—and withal so dangerous to his own eternal Safety?

Again, with Respect to Morals also—how many have been weak and sinful enough to plead *Fashion* or *Persuasion* in Favour of Fraud, Oppression, Perjury, and indeed Vice in general. But, surely, to commit evil to *oblige others*—must be always making *that* Evil—*our own*; and to commit Evil because *others* commit it—is to make *ourselves*—*equally* guilty and responsible. *Few* Men (if *any*) have it in their Power, I fear, *wholly* to avoid the Contagion of the World
where

where the *private* Vices are concerned: But *all* Men have it in their Power *wholly* to avoid *this Contagion of the World* where the *public* Vices are concerned. If we may not always be able to refrain from doing Injury to *ourselves*; yet *no* Temptation (either of *Inclination* or *Persuasion*) can possibly justify us in doing Injury to *others*: In the former Case, *Principle may exist* even with *Guilt*; but in the latter, it *cannot*: Yet rather than *forfeit—real* Principle—every good and honest Man would *forfeit—his earthly all*.

But methinks I hear Flattery particularly vindicated—that it does not amount to a *Vice*, but is (at most) only a *fashionable*, indeed a *necessary—Error*. If it be *fashionable*, yet never let us sink the human Understanding so low as to account it *necessary*. There is the greatest Difference between Respect and Flattery: The one *may* be a Duty—the other *must* be a Fault. Rudely or unseasonably to tell Men of their Imperfections

60 S E R M O N IV.

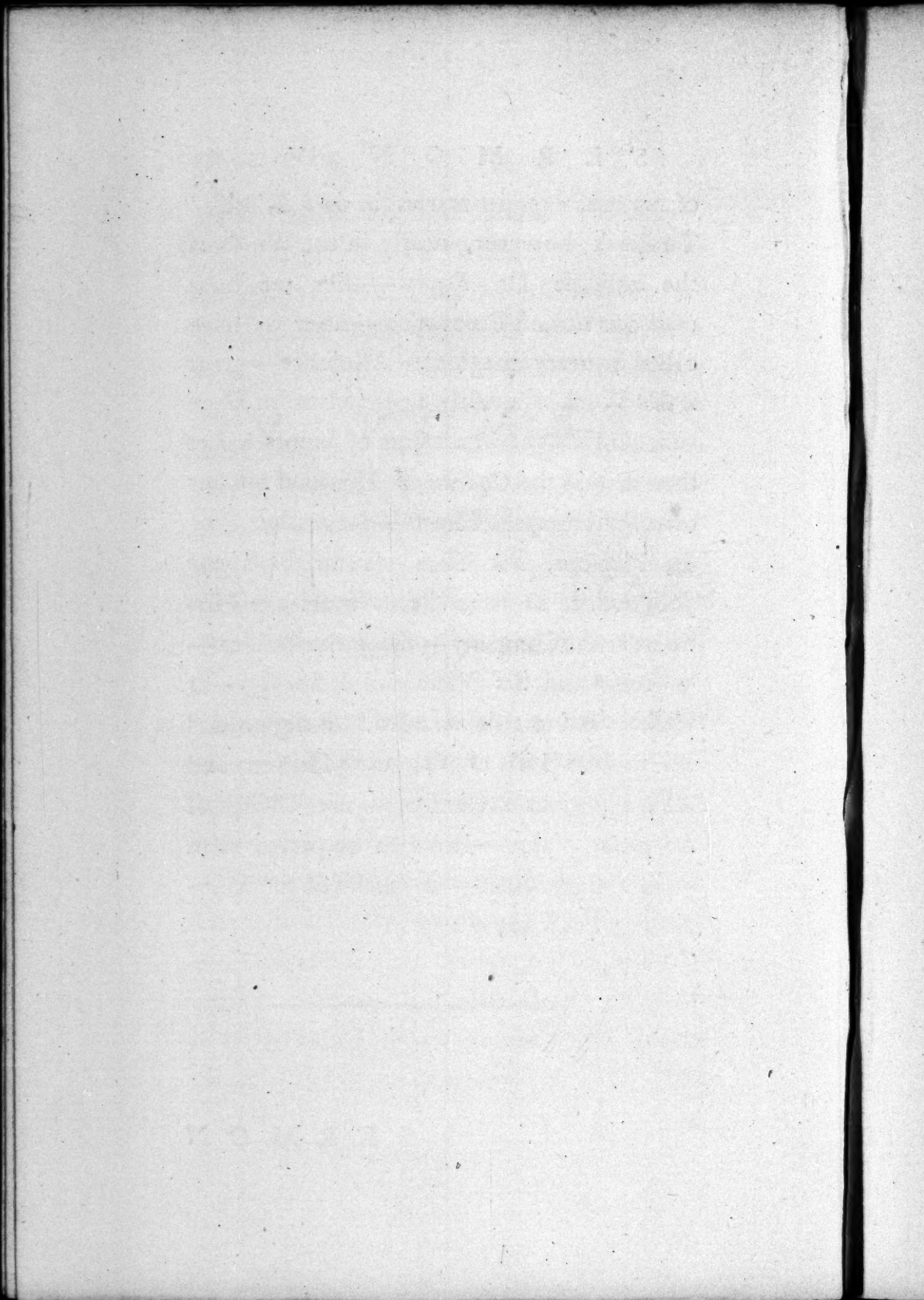
Imperfections will ever deserve Rebuke—but to ascribe to Men Virtues or Merit which we know that they are not possessed of—is as mean as it is criminal. But however Flattery may *sometimes* serve a *present* Purpose; yet upon the *whole* it seldom answers: Men who are *pleased* with it—to *Day*—may be *justly disgusted* at it—to-Morrow; and Men who exercise it with Success to *Day*—may be *justly degraded* for it—to *Morrow*: Whether therefore Flattery be a *Vice* or an *Error only*—we may venture to pronounce *Sincerity* to be the *chief Glory* of every Man's Character—and the *Want of it* our greatest *Shame* and *Dishonour*; as we shall hope more fully to make appear in two subsequent Discourses.

As a Conclusion of the Subject before us—let it be acknowledged that the Practice of *all Vice* and *Error*, whether of a *public* or *private* Nature—whether done to please *ourselves* or *others*—is generally seen (sooner or later) to bring a *Snare* with it: May none
of

S E R M O N IV. 61

of us ever experience *this* in *both* Worlds!
To speak, however, nearly in the Words of
the amiable Dr. Rogers—after we have
used our utmost Precaution—after we have
called in every imaginable Assistance—great
is the Work of qualifying ourselves for Hea-
ven, and for the Characters of Saints. Let
then neither the *Customs* of Mankind nor our
own *self-corrupted* Hearts—let neither Pro-
fit, Pleasure, nor *Fear*, so far bias our
Judgments, as to make us court the Ho-
nours or the Company—flatter the Foibles—
or commend the Vices and Infidelity—of
wicked and prophane Men. Religion and
it's exalted List of Virtues—Heaven and
all it's glorious Pretensions—are Things of
too great Value—either to be parted with
—in a *Compliment*—or sacrificed to an *im-
pious* and *dissolute* World.

S E R M O N



S E R M O N V.

U P O N

P R A Y E R — what it is, and
what it is not.

Preached before the UNIVERSITY of
CAMBRIDGE, 1773.

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S E R M O N V.

P S A L M V. 3.

I will *direct* my Prayer unto *Thee*.

P RAYER has ever been considered in all Ages and by all Nations however barbarous and unenlightened—as a Duty becoming—*incumbent upon* Man. Not the Necessity nor Importance of Prayer then—but the *Manner* in which it *ought* to be *performed*—is intended for the Subject of our present Reflection ; which seems to be happily suggested to us in the Language of the Text : “ I will *direct* my Prayer unto *Thee*.”

F

That

That human Nature is capable of attending so long or so steadily to *invisible* as it is to *visible* Objects—all Philosophers deny. God therefore (the Object of our Devotion) being an invisible Object—even the most pious Men find some Difficulty entirely to bring the Mind over from attending to the Things which are seen—to such a Direction of itself to the Deity, as is required in the great Duty of Prayer. Yet this very Cause of natural Wandering or Inattention in Prayer—marks out a natural Relief, tho' not, at all Times, an absolute Cure for it. It is beyond Dispute, that great Degrees of Perfection in the Act of Prayer are in our Power of attaining—if we could but be convinced of the Method of performing it aright—and secure Faith and Inclination in it's Favour.

And here I am sorry to find myself (in Justice to my Subject) under the Necessity of introducing a Variety of Observations—the

S E R M O N V. 67

the Truth of which will, I trust, sufficiently apologize for the *seeming* Freedom with which they may be delivered.

“ The Countenance of true Devotion tho’
 “ not to consist of any hypocritical Marks
 “ —is, nevertheless, peculiar to itself, and
 “ generally to be distinguished from the
 “ careless Worshipper.” I mean to pass
 over private Devotion, and only to speak of
 the Church. But if we look around our
 Churches; by how few does the Deity
 seem to be *truly* worshipped? Few even
 amongst the religious Part of our Congre-
 gations appear to have a just Idea of the
 Properties of Prayer. They fancy that
 they have been praying, when in Fact they
 may not have offered up a single Petition :
 They are apt, I fear, to mistake Meditation for
 Prayer—and *thinking* only of their Sins for
confessing them. Now nothing can consti-
 tute a *real* Confession of Sins, but a deep
 Contrition of the Spirit; and nothing can

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 Contrition of the Spirit ; and nothing can

constitute *real* Prayer but a *Direction* of the *Soul* to the divine Object of it. The Error of *good* Men in this Matter is more to be lamented as a Misfortune than as a Crime; yet for their own Happiness as well as for the Honour of public Worship—how much is it to be wished that they would find out and rectify so general a Mistake! But what Excuse can we make for those of our Congregation, who seem to be entirely lost to all Sense of Prayer; as if they were not at all concerned in what was doing, nor even desirous of becoming so? Again, what must we think of those who hope to pass for Devotionists, and to partake of the Benefits of public Worship—merely from the Assistance and Efficacy of the Word — *Amen*? “ The Prayer offered up by
 “ the Minister becomes the undoubted Prayer
 “ of the Man, who with a *Direction* of his
 “ *Heart* to *God* attends in every Part of it,
 “ and at the End delivers his own, *So be it* :
 “ But

“ But what can be the Efficacy of *that* Man’s
 “ *Amen*, who speaks it only from a Kind of
 “ *mechanical* Listen to the Voice of the Minis-
 “ ter at the Close of a Prayer or Collect” —
 when he himself, perhaps, during the deli-
 vering of such Prayer or Collect — has been
 engaged — either in telling his Gold — in
 envying or supplanting his Neighbour — in
 cherishing some sinful Passion — else (which
 is to make the best of it) in an idle *Vacancy*
 of Thought?

Such is the Charge which the Clergy in
 too many Instances may justly lay to the
 People: A Charge too of a serious and af-
 fronting Nature. But have the People no
 Cause to complain of the Clergy in this
 Matter? Not that such a Complaint, how-
 ever great or just, can lessen *their* Guilt, or
 excuse *their* Irreverence towards God. Yet
 surely if *we* can with *Truth* be arraigned of
 general Negligence and Inattention in Prayer
 — our *own* Guilt and Irreverence towards

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God should strike us with Concern and Remorse. And I am afraid that upon true Speculation we shall find—that we have really lessened ourselves *more*, and have given greater Advantages to our *dissenting* Brethren, by these Means, than by any other whatever. Their Objections to our Liturgy (great as they originally were and still may be) seem to be manifestly exceeded by their Objections to the *Manner*, in which it is but too *generally* performed. This Opinion I gained some Years ago from the Mouth of one of their most eminent Divines; and I am concerned to add that my own Experience, since that Time, has too fully convinced me of the Justness of his Remark. We should ever remember that *merely* to read a Form of Prayer cannot be *praying* in the Clergy, any more than sinking into a *mere Formality* of Posture and responding can be *praying* in the People. The Articles of our Faith and our Mode of Church-

S E R M O N V. 71

Church-Government—we shall, I hope, be always able to *defend*; but an irreverent Method of performing Divine Service—is (doubtless) *altogether indefensible*. Do we boast of the *singular* Blessing of a *Form* of Prayer solemnly *adapted* to the *divine* Ear? The greater our Boast, the greater surely is our Reproach: And was such *Form* even *more* perfect than it is—even *more* solemnly adapted to the divine Ear; yet if in the Use or Performance of it, we should be *wilfully* deficient in that Attention—that *Direction* of the Soul which alone can constitute *true* Devotion—however we might admire it as a *Composition*; it's Beauties would soon become too familiar to us—and for Want of *Inclination* to perform the Service—we should be as ready *then* as some of us may be *now*—to cry out —“ the *Church* does indeed “ take up *too much* of our *Time* in *Prayer*.”

I wish that it may not be considered as a Misfortune, that the *dignified* amongst us should so *universally* confine themselves to *preaching*, and that the still *more important* Services of the Desk should be the *constant* Lot of the *inferiour* Clergy. This Custom (tho' exercised with great Reason in the early Parts of the Reformation) has proved, perhaps, of no *small* Disservice to public Worship—no *slender* Weapon of Defence to our *Liturgical* Adversaries: It has, perhaps, been innocently instrumental towards *raising Preaching* (let me be justified in the Expression) *above itself*, by *sinking Prayer*—*infinitely below itself*—towards making too many of us (for the Sake of *superiour* Fame and *superiour* Dignity, and fearless now of the *unmeaning* Terms—*Heresy* and *Schism*) become *extravagant Enthusiasts* (I had almost said *Mountebanks*) in the *Pulpit*, and *irreverent—insensible Drones* in the *Desk*. Far be it from me to degrade *rational*, nay
frequent

frequent preaching: It is a noble and important Ordinance of the Church, and cannot be censured but in a comparative View; as it appears to render us wilfully and habitually negligent in an Ordinance still more noble, still more important: And if this should be found to be in Reality the Case; might we not with Reason complain that we have too much of preaching instead of praying—and contend; that if any Part of the full Service upon a Sunday Morning is ever to be dispensed with—let it be—the Sermon.

And pardon me for suggesting that this Negligence and Inattention in the Desk, so generally, and, I fear, so justly laid to our Charge—has somewhat of a Foundation even earlier than the Period of taking holy Orders. I will not, I need not explain myself any further. Advice in this Matter would come with more Gracefulness from an older and a wiser Man; yet *Principiis obsta* we all know to be most excellent Admonition: We shall
find

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find it so, respecting every *faulty* Step throughout the *whole* Journey of Life, and *especially serviceable* towards preventing a Custom or Habit in the Performance of religious Offices, which must needs reflect Dishonour upon ourselves and our Profession. Whatever our Errors may be *out* of the Church; yet I should hope that no one would wish to increase them *in* it. Our Passions, our Temptations, our Company, may, possibly, plead somewhat in our Favour for Transgressions *out* of the Church — but our Understandings as well as our Hearts must represent us as *wholly unpardonable* for any conscious or habitual Irreverence *within it's* sacred Walls.

If it should be conjectured, that in this Sermon I have had a *partial* Reverence to a *certain modern* Controversy; I will beg Leave to observe, that altho' too *strict* an *Adherence* to *Tradition* was complained of by our Saviour in the
Jewish

Jewish Elders — yet that the *faulty Love* of *Novelty* in the *Athenian* seems to be as sharply reprehended by *St. Paul*. *Antiquity*, (*merely as such*) must never be considered by *Protestants* as the *Standard* of Religion: Neither must *Antiquity* (*because such*) be *necessarily objected to*, and *given up* at Random, in Compliment to every *new* religious System: At this Rate of Discretion (to speak in the Words of one, who made a Study of the human Heart) “ We may at Length grow weary
 “ of the plain Truths of the Gospel — such
 “ as Death and Judgement — Heaven and
 “ Hell; and so (even before we are aware
 “ of it) turn universal Sceptics, and throw
 “ up every Thing that is worthy of the
 “ Name of Religion.”

To revert, however, more immediately to the Point in Question; we know that in our Liturgy as it *now* stands — God is capable of being *greatly glorified*; and let

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us suppose that had it undergone an Alteration *He* would have been *equally so*: Yet since this our Form of Prayer is not likely to undergo any Alteration — it seems to be both prudent and our *Duty* to hope that *no such Alteration* was at all *necessary* — and to endeavour to supply the *seeming Defects* of it, by an *additional Zeal and Propriety* in the *Use or Performance* of it. An Experiment of this Sort will unavoidably be *some Relief* to the *present Complaint* — it will also greatly raise us in the Character of Devotionists — and in Time may, probably, *alter — possibly, amend* our Judgments as Critics; in softening what we may *now* call — a *tedious Prolixity* — into an *interesting Copiousness*; or an *heavy and useless Tautology* — into a *pious and profitable Repetition*. Be this, however, as it may; what I have been *now* contending for — is a *Sincerity of Soul* in the Act of *Prayer* — a Sincerity which shall in nowise
lose

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lose it's Reward; in nowise lose it here
upon Earth—in the Approbation of the
Heart; in nowise lose it in Eternity—in
the personal Approbation of our God.

S E R M O N

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S E R M O N VI.

O N

SOLOMON's REQUEST.

Preached at St. MARY LE BOW,

on SUNDAY, APRIL 20, 1771.

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S E R M O N VI.

I KINGS iii. 10.

*And the Speech pleased the Lord that
Solomon had asked this Thing.*

SOLOMON was now in the Beginning
of his Reign, having but in the former
Chapter buried his Father King *David*.
At the fifth Verse of the present Chapter
we read that in *Gibeon* the Lord appeared
to *Solomon* in a Dream by Night—and
God said, "Ask what I shall give Thee."
We are not to judge of the *Visions* of these
Days by the *Dreams* of our own; because,

G

then

then it was very usual for the Lord to make Discoveries to the Mind when the Senses were asleep and inactive. And indeed that God does this *sometimes* even to *Us*, (tho' in a less important Way) I am very ready to believe: To say that He cannot—would be impious; to say that He has never done it—would, I suppose, be contradicting the certain Experience of many in every Age of the World. But to confine ourselves to *Solomon*, whose Mind seems to have been quite as full of *regular* Thought at the Time of this Vision—as we might have expected that it would have been, had not the Senses been locked up in Sleep: We find no rambling Answer returned to the Lord; but such an one as shewed the greatest Power of accurate and consistent speaking, as well as a most striking Diffidence, and Sublimity of Sentiment. And the Speech, we find, pleased the Lord. It could not do otherwise. Picture to yourselves

S E R M O N VI. 84

selfes so *young* a Man succeeding to the Crown of so *vast* a Kingdom : Think too of the natural Gaiety of *Solomon's* Temper, and then let us wondering—revere him for his Choice, in asking only for Wisdom and Understanding, by which he might discern between good and Evil, and so judge his People righteously.

And here let me refer you to the liberal reply on God's Part. No Wonder that a Promise so much exceeding the Request—caused the rapturous Heart of *Solomon* to wipe the drowsy Slumbers from his Eyes, and every other Sense to arise into peculiar Activity. Yes, he awoke, and behold it was a Dream : Yet not doubting the Reality of the heavenly Vision, “ he came to “ *Jerusalem*, and stood before the Ark of “ the Covenant of the Lord, and offered “ up Burnt-Offerings, and Peace-Offerings.”

Now as a Trial of his Wisdom and righteous Judgment—there came two Wo-

men before him, bringing with them a *dead* and a *living* Child. The Contest before the King was—whose the *living* Child should be—each declaring that it was hers. *Solomon's* Method of searching out the Mother was every Thing that is just, wonderfully, and affecting. Just indeed it could not well be to have taken away the Life of the innocent Babe: Yet as we are to suppose that *Solomon* knew how human Nature would work in this Matter—he in Appearance forgets that the Thing claimed had a *Being* valuable even to those who claimed it; and therefore by ordering the Child to be divided, he supposes that he might please them both, and be thought by the Court to have passed a righteous Judgment. It may not be uninteresting, perhaps, to fancy this Scene now before us. *Solomon* upon his Throne—the Sword drawn in his Hand—and the poor little Innocent upon the Point of being sacrificed. Behold the

real

real Mother swooning, as it were, at the Sight of the drawn Sword, just ready to fall upon, nay and to divide her Infant! How do her maternal Bowels *yearn* upon the little Victim—to save whom (tho' it be delivered up to a pretended Parent) mark her generous Resignation: “O my Lord—give *her* the *living* Child, and in no wise slay *it*.” Upon which, fancy the other (*unnatural*) Woman (losing all Regard for the Babe, and filled with Revenge towards the agitated, humane Mother) exulting at the Sentence of the Judge, and anxious for the Execution of it—hear her own barbarous Expression—let it be neither *mine* nor *thine*, but *divide* it. Then did the King's Discernment appear just both to himself and to those present. The Difference of Countenance and Behaviour in the two Women—plainly pointed out the *real* Mother of the Child: And the King answered and said—“Give *her* the *living* Child”—

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her who asked it's *Life*—"and in no wise
 "flay it—for *she* is the *Mother* thereof.
 "And all *Israel* heard of the Judgment
 "which the King had judged, and they
 "feared the King, for they saw that the
 "Wisdom of God was in him to do Judgment."

The chief Use that I would wish to make of this Promise to *Solomon* and the Fulfillment of it is—that as *he* asked of God the Blessing of a wise and understanding Heart to govern his People—so *we* should learn to apply to the same all powerful Deity for the Enjoyment of every lawful and eligible Wish. It is possible for us to thirst after Things, which tho' lawful—may not be expedient to our Happiness. Now all the Pleasures dependent upon Time or the World—are capable of being *thus* mistaken by us; and therefore altho' we should ask any of them of God, or should *wish* for them only, and he should not permit

permit them to be given to us—yet if we search diligently we shall find, by and by, upon Reflection and Experience—that such Disappointment has been profitable to us. So likewise if we (as it were) insist upon being gratified—and God acquiesces in our random and ill-judged Petitions—Time and Circumstances in Life, will, probably, soon convince us, that our Notions of Happiness were falsely grounded; for that by the *Enjoyment* of our hasty and *positive* Wishes—we are become *wretched*. Where shall we meet with the Man, who in some *material* Instance or another—has not experienced the Truth of these Observations?

With Regard indeed to Blessings which owe not their Existence or Support to the Changes and Chances of this mortal Life—for Blessings like these we cannot be too importunate. It never can be wrong to beseech the Almighty to make us honest,

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humane, just, and good. We may rest assured that it never can be against the divine Will—that Mankind should be possessed of Virtues like these: On the Contrary, that he is ever most delighted with those Dispositions, in whom these Virtues are mostly to be found. The more averse we are by Nature from the Practice of what is right—the more importunate should our Requests be. *Solomon*, it is true, received as soon as he asked: Yet at the Time that we admire the Power and extraordinary Favour of the Deity respecting *Solomon*—let us take Care that we distrust him not respecting *ourselves*; tho' we seek our spiritual Blessings with Sighs and Tears—and tho' we wait long for *Enjoyment*. Never let us despair—never let us give over petitioning the Almighty for any Thing which tends to *his* Glory, and the good of the Christian and moral World. Altho' Days of immediate Inspiration as well as heavenly Visions

—are

—are *now* Things not to be expected: yet what happened to our Forefathers should be sufficient to fix in *us* the same Confidence in the same God: Added to all this—we believe and preach for *our* happy Conviction in this Point—the Omnipotent himself risen from the Dead.

As to the *exact* Nature of *Solomon's* Request (however meritorious, and however proper for *him*) it is of Concern but to *Few*. *Few* are born to govern over a great People! Those indeed who act as Rulers in Life (tho' it be only over a private Family or a small Community of Men) will do right to join in *Solomon's* Petition. Let it be remembered, that to *govern well* is more difficult than to be *well governed*: more difficult, I mean, with Regard to pleasing God: To wish to do this—is therefore certainly a moral Wish, and as such must be always lawful and expedient. The *Wisdom* of *Solomon*, as it is never to be
found

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found in *any* Man, so it can *never* be *ne-*
cessary in *any* Man.—But as to a good
 Heart—this is *always necessary* in *every*
 Man, (especially in him who governs)—
 and it should be the Business of our Lives
 to obtain and to preserve it. And an un-
 derstanding Heart in this Sense—to discern
 between good and evil—brings the Appli-
 cation of *Solomon* home—to Mankind in
 general. The Man who desires to love
 his God with all possible ^{*Sincerity*} *Serenity* of Soul
 —to do to others as he would wish that
 they should do to *him*—and to learn and
 labour to do his Duty in that State of Life
 unto which it shall have pleased God to
 call him; the Man, I say, who *wishes*
thus cannot be without an understanding
 Heart to judge and well govern himself,
 and such an one may rest assured, that the
 Speech will ever please the Lord that he
 asked this Thing.

And

S E R M O N VI. 91

And whilst we *thus* apply for moral or spiritual Blessings *only*—we may, probably, procure temporal Blessings *also*. Promises indeed belong to Times of Inspiration—we must not expect *them*; but it is the Property of divine Goodness to confer even *more* than we *desire*. It was but too natural to suppose that *Solomon* would have asked for Riches and Honours—or Success in War—or long Life: Yet when he confined his Request *to* intirely to the Mind—how gracious was the Promise on God's Part, touching every temporal Comfort and Advantage!

But let it be with great Seriousness considered—that our own *best* Endeavours are *absolutely necessary*—that our Prayers and Confidence on God will not do *alone*. As the Proof of a good Heart cannot be given without a Temptation to evil or an Opportunity of acting well; so unless we use the natural Means to keep off an Evil, and
allow

allow ourselves Time for the Practice of Good—such Proof of an understanding Heart must needs be wanting with Respect to the World, and as I should think—it must be very imperfect in the Sight of God. *Solomon* himself, tho' his Knowledge was in a great Measure infused, did not neglect to cultivate such Knowledge, thus by Application and Care perfecting the extraordinary Gifts which he had received of Heaven.

The chief Instruction, however, which the present Subject conveys to us—is manifestly confined to Petitions to the divine Throne. If then we wish for prosperous Fortune, or to escape an impending Affliction—always let us address the Deity in these Words of our resigned Saviour—“Father, if Thou art willing,” This let us do, altho' we seek Prosperity with pleasing Sensations—and back our Petitions to avoid Misfortunes, with strong Crying and Tears.

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Tears. But for spiritual Blessings—Blessings which intirely depend upon the Mind—for these (as we have before observed)—we cannot be too *positive* or too importunate: “The more earnestly we cry—the
“ more lively Sense do we discover of the
“ Worth of such Blessings, and the better
“ Disposition to receive them.” And if we find (for some wise Purposes) that God withholds from us a *Goodness of Heart*; let us persevere in asking it—even in the Words of the Patriarch *Jacob*—“I will not let
“ Thee go, unless Thou bless me.” To this divine Being, *who* is always more ready to *hear* than *we* to *pray*—and to give *more* than we desire or deserve—to Him (the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) be everlasting Praise—even from Generation to Generation—World without End. Amen.

S E R M O N

100

S E R M O N VII.

U P O N

A G U R's R E Q U E S T.

3 E R M O N VII

U P O N

ACQUA: TROUPE

S E R M O N VII.

Preached at COURT on *Sunday, Oct. 2,*
1774.

PROVERBS XXX. 7, 8, 9.

Two Things have I required of Thee, deny me them not, before I die: Remove far from me Vanity and Lies; give me neither Riches nor Poverty; feed me with Food convenient for me: Lest I be full and deny Thee, and say who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the Name of my God in vain.

FROM the Text we are invited to draw the two Extremes—*Greatness and Obscurity*—of Station—*Riches, and Poverty*: Afterwards, the Medium of
H these;

these, which according to wise *Agur* is the *Standard* of human Happiness. But I shall, finally, have Occasion to observe, that only the Nature of Things is here to be attended to, which Men may either improve or vitiate, as they are influenced by their Passions and Conduct.

“Prosperity then considered in the *best*
 “Light is accompanied with many Incon-
 “veniences—considered in *any other* Light
 “—it is, doubtless, a dangerous State.”
 The profuse, giddy, dissipating Man of Fortune has ever round him a thousand servile Parasites—a thousand fawning Sy-cophants—ready to immortalize his few and, perhaps, but *little* Virtues; or if he be even devoid of *any* Virtues—to construe into *Virtues*, the most glaring *Vices*. His Life, in short, is a continued Delusion; and when he comes to die, it is well for him if he does not experience, that he has not only been flattered out of his *For:une*, but out of his *Happiness* also.

Again,

S E R M O N VII. 99

Again, in our Acquisition of Riches and Honours—we too generally neglect to sacrifice to Contentment, the chief Spring of human Happiness. “Some of this Stamp are governed by the *Clue* of Ambition, “others by the *Lure* of Avarice.” Ambition when it excites a Man to just and honourable Actions upon just and honourable Principles—such as make him grateful for his present Situation, tho’ willing to raise it—such as render him delighted with no Popularity but what is seconded by the *Testimony* of his *own Heart*; this Man’s Ambition is laudable, and must afford him real Satisfaction: But we are now speaking of a Passion which prevails upon a Man to go into the World mindful of himself only; “who catches at the Applause of an “idle, impetuous, mistaken Multitude, “without once caring whether he has de- “served it or not—or what Use he should “put it to.” Now such an one is necessa-

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rily *disquieted* both in his *Successes* and in his *Disappointments*: If Hundreds attend upon him to proclaim his Greatness—his Vanity wishes for Thousands—and if Thousands—then for Tens of Thousands—and so on, till the whole Earth should pay him Adoration: And even in this Case, he would be more apt with *Alexander* to wish for *other* Worlds which may afford his Vanity *fresh* Qualifications—than with the *satisfied Domitian* (after he had possessed himself of the *Roman* Empire) to turn his Desires upon *catching Flies*. But should the Man of this Turn be disappointed in his Hopes and Expectations—totally unsuccessful in any of his *favourite* Schemes—he henceforth leads a Life of Discouragement, and if I may so say—of *proud* Despair.

Next let us take a faint Survey of the Miser, and see how far his Condition is to be *envied*—or rather *dreaded*. Avarice is
said

said to stick deeper into the Soul than any other Vice; and indeed very little of Observation will convince us of the Truth of this: In general, Avarice strikes at the Root of every Thing great and becoming: It's Possessor (according to Mr. *Addison*) is neither happy *himself*, nor will he let those *connected with him* be so: His Character is seldom other, than that of a peevish and cruel *Master*—a severe *Parent*—a gloomy, unaffectionate *Husband*—a reserved and a suspecting *Friend*. Surely Avarice is a *singular* Curse upon whomsoever it falls: For notwithstanding every Argument in Favour of prudent Gain and prudent Management—the Opinion of a Miser debases the very Being of a human Creature, “and causes
 “our valuable Passions, which might other-
 “wise have made us happy, to leave their
 “natural Bent, and expose us to the Hatred
 “of God and the World.”

But to shift this Scene, and to suppose Wealth and Honours to exist without Avarice and Discontent: Still how naturally do these Situations lead Men on to Noise and Hurry, and a continued Round of idle Dissipation. What great Command must these Men have over themselves—to give the Mind *Leisure* to think *seriously*; and how apt their Situations in Life are to make them so sensible of being able to help *themselves*, as to *forget*, or even, I fear, sometimes, to *disown* the *All-sufficiency* of God—or in the Words of *Agur*—to be full and deny Him, and say, who is the Lord?

To wish then for any of these Characters (if such be the Effects of them) would be Folly, and hurtful to us, who have all the Reason in the World to wish to be removed far from them. Nor, as I am now to observe—will *extreme* Poverty or extreme Obscurity of Station be found *desirable*, or indeed, generally speaking, conducive to

Religion

Religion and Virtue. As wretched as they are numerous are the Inconveniencies of *this* State. Even the very *Nature* of a Man may be *changed* by it. A Thousand Things happen to him which the *World* do not, or will not *know* of—cannot, or will not *prevent*. Friendship he finds but an airy Sound: The rich and goodly Produce of the Earth is nothing to *him*; *he* enjoys these Things *no more* than the *irrational* Parts of the Creation: Nay, nor *so much*—because Nourishment is dealt out to *them* agreeably to their respective Natures: He seems, in a Word, to be shut out from Society—to be denied every Privilege due to his Existence. Now what Encouragement is to be expected in such a Breast as this? Is it, can it be pleasing thus to breathe, known only to Contempt, Solitude, and Want? Is it unlikely indeed that we may be led to charge God *foolishly* when such a Scene of complicated Ills is

placed before us? To think that our Piety, our many humane Virtues, and withal an honest, incessant Industry—to think that all these are *sometimes* insufficient to keep us from the sad School of Poverty—must be a Reflection, which none but very great Souls can possibly support: The Chances, however, are so much against even the *best* of us, that if we have a Mind to be secure—we shall never *request* to be put to the *Trial* of it. And if this be the Case with the Man of Poverty who is willing to make every possible Resistance against the Evils so incident to his Situation; how much more dangerous must *his* Condition be, who at *once* falls into the Snare which pious *Agur* wishes to avoid—who at *once* is induced to *steal*, and to take the Name of his God in *vain*? How such a Disposition increases by Indulgence—I need not undertake to prove: The Man—who being exposed to Want *thus readily* parts with
his

his *Honesty* to gain Relief—will very soon be prevailed upon to part with his *Religion* too; and having once given up these Valuable—he finds no *Inclination*—but if an *Inclination*, he seldom has *Power* to desist from following this unjust and illegal Course, till he becomes a Sacrifice to the Laws of his Country.

Let not what I have urged against Affluence and Poverty—or against the most exalted and the most obscure Situations—be received, as if I supposed that God by placing us in *either* puts it out of our *Power* to *please* Him: We may, doubtless, and it is expected that we *shall* be good Servants under *any* Circumstances. What I have endeavoured to prove is—that *some* Situations require greater Fortitude, greater Perseverance than *others*—that the rich or great Man's Life is far from a *secure*, and *should* be as far from an *idle* one—that his Trust is of an important Nature, and that
he

he has the whole World to persuade him to break and violate it. So on the other Hand, that a State of Poverty and extreme Obscurity is also vastly intricate, and dangerous to our Virtue—that the poor Man's general Fate in the World is such as must hurt a rational Creature, and that unless he puts on the whole Armour of God, he will have an hard Matter to withstand so severe a Conflict. Yet if we were but to guard the Mind with Reason and Reflection enough to make us look upon ourselves at all Times as under the Guidance of a God, who (if we ask it with Sincerity) will give us Ability to overcome our Trials, (however great and numerous) and who (hereafter at least) will reward us according to the Nature and Frequency of such Victories; if, I say, we can but be convinced of this most happy Truth (which as Christians we are bound to believe) — *then* may we be indifferent, as it were, in
our

our Choice of Situations: Or though (to avoid a greater Share of sinful Temptation, and to enjoy the less disturbed Mediocrity) we should request to be removed from Riches and Poverty—yet we shall be happy, because we shall act becomingly and as God's Servants—let either the one or the other prove our appointed Lot.

But it may be Time now to introduce the *Eligibleness* of *that State* which *Agur* so much wishes to *enjoy*—the *Happiness* of *that Man* whom *Agur* so much wishes to *be*—A Man whom Poverty does not afflict, nor Riches torment—A Man neither obnoxious to the *Envy* so peculiar to the *Great*, nor yet to the *Contempt* so often thrown upon the Man of *Poverty*—A Man who sleeps sound; undisturbed either by the Bitterness of Distress, or by the Restlessness of Luxury—A Man, who when he awakes—wants not *Means* to obtain his *daily Bread*, nor yet is filled with *trifling* Care

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Care how to pass the *Day* in *expensive* Dissipation—A Man who thinks upon his God with Gratitude, and justly commends his Estate before him; which, though it forbids him the Pomp of a Monarch, amply fills up this Degree of *dangerous* Greatness, by placing him above the sad Ills of the wretched Slave—A Man, who has it not in his Power to be so lost in Sensuality and Independency—to be so full as to deny his God; nor has he any Inducement from the Feelings of Adversity, either to steal, or to take the Name of his God in vain—A Man, in a Word, who has great Reason to be pleased and happy with his Lot, which is, doubtless, cast upon the fairest Ground—where he is not “liable to be trampled upon as the humble Shrub, nor exposed to Winds like the lofty ^FVine.”

If the *Eligibleness* of the *State* and the *Happiness* of the *Man* were always *sure* to be *thus* united; we might congratulate the
far

far greater Part of Mankind upon being happy, to whose Lot this middle Station manifestly falls. But this, I fear, is by no Means the Case. Persons in the middle Station are too apt to behave tyrannically to their Inferiours, and insolently to their Betters; and to adopt a Mode of *Living* in Imitation of their Superiours—as awkward as it is mistaken—as absurd and ridiculous, as it is *hurtful* to their *Fortunes* and *dangerous* to their *Reputations*. Nay, upon a strict Observance it will be found perhaps—that Men thus placed in a Situation so calculated by Nature to render them *happiest*—are the Characters in Life who make *themselves more* wretched, and offend Religion and Society *more* than Men placed in the *extreme* Stations—of Greatness and Obscurity.—of Riches and Poverty. So that after all—it is not *this* or *that* Situation, but our *well* or *ill* behaving ourselves in our own *respective* ones—which alone can
justly

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justly gain us either Esteem or Reproach, or justly constitute us either happy or miserable. *Happy* did I say? It is easily pronounced, and the Word carries with it a most delightful Sound; but it is an Epithet of such a Nature, that in order to prove it's Justness, a Man must speak it of *himself*. Nay, so sudden and so great are the Changes of the human Heart—that a Man may *think* himself and may *be—happy—to Day*—and *think* himself and may *be—deservedly wretched—to Morrow*: Therefore no *just* Estimate of human Happiness can be taken—till we come to die. This is the only Period, when Things are likely to appear stripped of all Disguise—the only Period when we may be supposed incapable of deceiving—either ourselves or others: No Room being *now* left for a Change of Sentiment and Conduct—we are likeliest to arrive at an *almost certain* Knowledge of *what we are—what we have been—what we*

S E R M O N VII. III

we *shall be*: In order to gain this most important Secret—the grand Question will be—not *what* Station we have *filled*, but *how* we have *filled* it? Notwithstanding therefore the *Wisdom* of *Agur's* Request—we shall do well to attend to the still *wiser* Consideration—that the true Estimate of Man's Happiness is not to be formed from *Station*—but from *Action*—Action founded upon this *great Christian* Principle—that Vice in *any* Station—*must* be punished—Virtue in *any* Station—*must* be rewarded.



S E R M O N V I I I .

U P O N

P L A I N T R U T H .



S E R M O N VIII.

MATTHEW ii. 2.

Where is he that is born King of the Jews?

TRUTH (by which I mean especially—*divine* Truth) is the *one* Thing here below—worthy of the Care and Researches of Man. It *alone* is the Source of solid Satisfaction; the Foundation of our *Hopes*, the Consolation of our *Fears*—the Soother of our *Misfortunes*, the Remedy of all our *Pains*: It *alone* is the *Resource* of a good Conscience, the *Ter-*

rer of a *bad* one—the secret *Torture* of *Vice*, the inward *Recompence* of *Virtue*: It *alone* immortalizes those who *love* it—renders glorious the *Chains* of those who *suffer* for it—and respectable the *Poverty* of those, who have quitted *all* for it's Sake.

There are, who love to make *Truth* the Subject of the Contention of *vain* Philosophy. There are again, who wish (as it were) to know the *Truth*, but they search not for it as they *ought*, because (at the Bottom) they would be displeased to find it. And there are a third Sort of Men, who being somewhat more flexible—suffer themselves to *stagger* at the Evidence of *divine* Truth; yet repulsed by the *Difficulties* which it *proposes*, and the *Perseverance* which it *requires*—they receive it not with *that* Joy and Knowledge which it inspires, when Men have been *for some Time* acquainted with it.

How

How different *these* Dispositions to *that* of the three eastern Sages! Accustomed as they had been by a *public* Profession of Wisdom and Philosophy to have Recourse to the Powers of *vain* human Reason, and to soar above *popular* Prejudices; yet in the present Case they did not so much as *attempt* to examine if this *new* Star could not find it's *Causes* in *Nature*: Instructed by the inspired Prophets concerning this *new* Star of *Jacob*—that it *must* one Day appear—they suffer *it* at *once* to determine and to conduct them—knowing that divine *Grace* always leaves *some* Obscurities in the Ways wherein it calls us, in order that it might not take from our Faith the *Merit* of a Submission—and that when Men are so happy as to discover only one *Glimmering* of Truth, the Uprightness of the Heart should supply what is *wanting* in the Evidence of the Light: “ We have seen his

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“Star, say the wise Men, and are come to
“worship Him.”

These eastern Sages could not be ignorant that the News which they came to pronounce at *Jerusalem* would be displeasing to *Herod*: He was ever in Fear that some Heir of the Blood of the Kings of *Judah* would claim the Heritage of his Fathers, and sit upon the Throne promised to their Posterity: Upon which Account we must not wonder that he appears so little to respect Men, who declare in the Midst of *Jerusalem* that the *King* of the *Jews* is *born*, and declare him too to a People so zealous for the Blood of *David*, and so impatient of all foreign Dominion. And yet the wise Men conceal nothing of what they had seen in the East:—They do not cover this great Event over with Expressions at all calculated to suppress the Jealousy of *Herod*. They might indeed have called the *Messiah*, whom they were
seeking

seeking, the *Embassador of Heaven*, or the *Desire of Nations*: They might, it is true, have marked him out by Titles *even less odious* to the Ambition of *Herod*: But full of the *Truth* which had appeared to them—they know nothing of such timid Management—concluding that those who had not a Mind to receive the *Truth* but thro' the Channel of *Error*—were not *worthy* of it: They could not explain their Errand under *Reserves* and *Disguises unworthy* of it: They ask without Hesitation—where is he who is born King of the *Jews*? They do not propose their Question with a *soft Medium* likely to produce an Answer to *deceive* them—they wished to be convinced—they sought the *Truth* with *Sincerity*, and therefore it was that they so *happily found* it.

A Disposition *this*, as rare and uncommon in *Degree*, as the great Event itself, which we are *here* contemplating. Men do

not find the *Truth*, because they do not seek it with an Heart upright and sincere: They disperse throughout all Points which lead to it—Clouds, which cause them to lose their Way: We indeed consult touching this Matter—but we cover our Passions over with Colours so *soft* and *so like* unto the *Truth*, that we force ourselves, at Length, to answer—that such *Deception*—is Truth itself: We have no Inclination to be *instructed*—we wish to be *deceived*; and to add to *the Passion* which thus *inlaves* us—an *Authority*, which serves only to calm and stupify us. Such is the Illusion of, I fear, the far greater Part of Mankind! Even the best of Men have, I fear, within them *some* secret and privileged Attachment, by Means of which they take but *Half* the Guide of Conscience—some cherished, ill-turned Passion (saved from the Ashes of others) which prevents them from searching heartily for the Truth.

Again,

S E R M O N VIII. 121

Again, there are always of our Neighbours and Acquaintance, whose Conduct betrays us. Our Friends are silent: Our Superiours, through Complaisance, are very careful and tender of their Sentiments: Our Inferiours are perpetually upon their Guard, lest they should offend us: The World in general indeed speak in such soothing Accents, as only serve to draw a fresh Veil over our Affliction: The Hand which should *kindly* mark out our Defects to us—so far from attempting to reclaim us—is *thus* too often used, only to stamp us with a *fresh* Blemish. Behold the contrary Conduct of the wise Men: Alone—without any Regard to their Friends and Neighbours—in Spite of all the *public* Speeches and Derisions—whilst the *Rest* of the People either despise the miraculous Star, or consider it only as the Observation and the Design of these three Sages—as an *affronting* Design, and a Weakness *unworthy* of them

them to receive and countenance.—Alone, I say, these good and wise Men declare against the common Sentiment: They alone obey the *new* Guide: They alone forsake their Country and their Children, and account as nothing impossible *that Singularity*, of which the heavenly Luminary discovers to them the *Necessity* and the *Wisdom*.

And here I am led to another Instruction well worthy of our Attention. What oftentimes causes the *Truth* to be useless even to good inclined Men is—that they do not judge of it by the Lights of their *own* Mind, but by the Impression which it makes upon *others*. In those *happy* Moments, when we *seek* not the *Truth* but in our *own particular* Conscience, we *necessarily* see our Errors, and condemn *ourselves* in the Sight of God. We *instantly* propose to ourselves a *new* Way. In a short Time after, we enter again into the World, and not consulting any longer *more than*
common

S E R M O N VIII. 123

common Example—we begin to *justify* ourselves—we restore to ourselves *again* that *false* Peace, which *before*, in *private*, we had endeavoured to destroy. Hence we may *also* learn, that the *Perseverance* which the Cause of *Truth* requires—makes *it* too often to become extinct within us: It affects us as it did the young Man in the Gospel—not as it did the wise Men, when on their Return Home—the miraculous Star appeared to them again.

They had seen the Magnificence of *Jerusalem*—the Pomp of it's Edifices—the Majesty of it's Temple—the Grandeur of the Court of *Herod*: But the Gospel does not remark that they were touched with this Spectacle of human Glory: They behold *all* these grand Objects without Attention—without Pleasure—without any Mark of Approbation or Surprize: They do not once ask for the Treasury, and the Riches of the Temple; being *wholly* intent

tent upon the Light from Heaven which had shewed itself to them—they had no Eyes for what passed in the World: Their Hearts being thus detached from *every* Thing else—would find out nothing but *that Truth*, which so rejoiced, which so interested, which so comforted and refreshed them.

But where shall we meet with Men, who, like these eastern Sages, after having known *the Truth*—will not henceforth look upon any Thing else but *it*? Who make *it* the Resource of all their Labours—the Spur of their Inactivity—the Succour of their Temptations—the most solid and endearing Delight of their Soul? And yet we may rest assured—that the World—that it's Pleasures—that it's Hopes—that it's Greatness—must needs appear vain, puerile, disgustful—when compared with those Pleasures, those Hopes, and that Greatness, which present themselves to the
Man

S E R M O N VIII. 125

Man who knows, and is known of God—to the Man, who regards not this lower Earth, but as a Country which *must*, one Day, be totally destroyed—to the Man, whom nothing can *substantially* please, but what in it's Nature must continue to please *for ever*: Finally, all the Objects of Vainety are nothing to such a Man as *this*—but either as Embarrassments in the Way of his Duty, or sad Monuments, which force upon him the Remembrance of his Crimes.

Such are the happy Fruits of receiving *the Truth* (as the three eastern Sages did) with Submission, with Sincerity, with Joy. May *all* Mankind experience these good Effects of an honest and an undissemblying Heart, if it were only that we might live quiet and *peaceable* Lives *here*; but chiefly, as an Heart devoted to *the Truth* cannot fail of rendering us happy in another
and

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and a better Life, through the Merits and Intercession of that divine Personage, who tho' *born King of the Jews*—came into the World, and died—for the Benefit and Salvation of all Kingdoms and Nations of the World.



S E R M O N

S E R M O N IX.

UPON

TRUTH DISSEMBLED.



S E R M O N IX.

MATTHEW ii. 5.

*And they said unto him—in Bethlehem of
Judea.*

WE are here to point out the *De-*
formity of Truth—when *dissem-*
bled in the Manner that it was by
the chief Priests and Scribes—in the An-
swer given to *Herod* in the Text.

Consulted by *Herod* upon the Place where
the *Christ* should be born—they answer to
the *Truth*—that *Bethlehem* was the Place
marked out by the Prophets—wherein
K would

would be accomplished this great Event : But they do not add—that the Star foretold in the inspired Books having, at Length, appeared—that the Kings of *Saba* and *Arabia* being come with Presents to adore the new-born Chief destined to rule over *Israel*—it ought to be no longer doubted but that the Clouds had *now* brought forth *this Just One* : They do not assemble the *People* together to declare to them these happy Tidings : They do not attend the wise Men to *Bethlehem*, that by these Means they might animate *Jerusalem* by their Example : Repulsed by a *criminal* Timidity they observe a total Silence respecting *these* Matters—they *retain* the Truth in *Injustice* ; and whilst Strangers come from the Extremities of the East to publish aloud in *Jerusalem*—that the King of the Jews is born—these Preachers—these Elders and Scribes—say nothing about this Event, but sacrifice to the Ambition of *Herod*—the
Interests

Interests of *Truth*—the *Hope* most dear to their Nation—and the Chief Honour of all their Ministry.

But this Defect, in certain Points, is but too prevailing in private Life: Even the best of us oftentimes render ourselves culpable by this *silent* Diffimulation towards our Brethren: We are apt to think that we have discharged our Duty to Truth, so long as we say nothing *against* it: We hear Virtue *decied*, the Doctrine of the World *maintained*—it's Abuses and Maxims *justified*, and *those* of the Gospel *ridiculed* and *blasphemed*: We hear *all* this, I say, without submitting, perhaps, to such Impiety *ourselves*; and yet we have not Fortitude enough to disavow it *openly*, but content ourselves in not authorising it by our *own* Example. Now it appears to me *certain*—that as we are *all* charged *individually* with the Interests of *Truth*; to be *silent* when Men *attack* it *openly before us*—is, in a

criminal Degree, to become *ourselves*—it's *Enemy* and *Deceiver*.

There is a second Manner, by which Men *dissemble* the Truth; in *softening* it with Temperaments, and a Complaisance which *affront* and wound it. The Priests and the Scribes *forced* by the *Evidence* of the wise Men to give *Glory* to the *Truth*—*soften* the *Authority* of it, by Expressions of *Reserve*. They attempt to lessen the *Respect* which they owe to the *Truth*, by a *Complaisance* which they wish to shew to *Herod*. They suppress the Title of *King*, which the wise Men came to *give*, and which the Prophets had so often *given*—to the *Messiah*: They mark *Him* out by *one* Quality *only*—*Him* who had *all* Knowledge and *all* Power at his own Disposal: They chuse rather to represent him as a Lawgiver established to rule the Manners, than as a Saviour risen up to deliver his People from Slavery: And altho' they themselves

selves looked for a *Messiah*—a King and Conqueror—yet they *palliate* the Truth, which they have even a Mind to *avow*—and labour to blind the Prince, whose Ear they had so firmly obtained.

In this Particular the Destiny of great Men is really deplorable. It is seldom that they are *instructed*, because it is seldom that those about them will attempt to *instruct* them, but by *pleasing* them. And yet methinks the Generality of them would love *Sincerity*, if they were but once to become *acquainted* with it. The Passions, and the Follies of the Age, assisted by all the Pleasures which naturally encompass the Dwellings of the *Great*—are able, I will allow, but too often to drag Them into Attention: But at the Bottom—I am willing to believe that *Sincerity* is *respected* by them. Such is the Fashion of the World, that *Ignorance of Truth* causes *more Princes and great Men* to be censured and condemned

—than Persons of the *meanest* State and Condition; and I am convinced, that *that* base Complaisance which is too generally shewed towards the *Great*, both by State and *Church* Ministers—dishonour^d a *Country* more, and brings more Odium upon *Religion*—than the most glaring Scandals and Misfortunes which afflict either the *Church* or the State.

But are Princes and great Men *only*—*deceived*? And are those *about* Princes and great Men the *only* Persons who *flatter* and *deceive*? Look into *private* Life, and you will find that the Conversation, the Conduct, and Behaviour of Mankind—are but too often *Palliations* of the *Truth*—*Temperaments* intended to reconcile *it* with the Prejudices and Passions of those with whom they live and are acquainted, or from whom they conceive Hopes and Expectations of Favours. How seldom do we shew them real Truths, but by Ways
which

which we know will *please* them? How ready are we to discover a fair Side even in their most glaring Imperfections? And as all the Passions bear a Resemblance to some *Virtue*, how apt is mistaken Man to seek to *know himself*, by the Assistance only of *such Resemblance*!

Thus it happens—that in the Presence of a *too ambitious* Man, we speak of the Love of Glory and of the Desire of gaining it, as the *only* Thoughts becoming a *great* Mind: We flatter his Pride—we set Fire to his Wishes by Hope, and by flattering and chimerical Predictions: We nourish the Error of his Imagination, in bringing *near* to him *Phantoms*, with which he is *ever* feeding himself. We venture, *perhaps*, to complain in *general*—that Men should be *so much* agitated about Things which *Hazard* distributes, and which Death *to Morrow* may snatch from us: But how *seldom* do we venture to blame

that *foolish* Friend, who sacrifices to such a mere *Vapour*—his Repose—his Life—and his Conscience!

In the Presence of a Man given to Revenge—we are apt to justify his Resentment and his Choler: We justify his Crime in his *Spirit*: We gratify his Passion, in exaggerating the Rancour of his Enemy. We venture, perhaps, to say, that we ought to pardon one another; but how seldom do we venture to *add*—that the first Degree of a Pardon—is never more to speak of an Injury which we have received!

In the Presence of a Prodigal—his Profusions strike us only as an Air of *Generosity* and *Elegance*: Before a Miser—his hard-heartedness and sordid Soul—are nothing more than *wise* Moderation, and *good* domestic Conduct: Nay, and before the *Great* themselves—Men, whom at a *Distance*, we are so ready to find Fault with—
their

their Prejudices and *their* Errors—receive from us Apologies altogether *borrowed*: We seem to respect their Imperfections as we do their *Persons*—and even to make *their* Prejudices become our *own*.

In short, such is the mistaken Turn of Mankind in general—that they too readily borrow the Errors of those, with whom they are connected. Few of us speak our *own* Language: And this *unworthy* Breach of *Sincerity* we call—the *Science* of the *World*—the *great* Art of *pleasing* and *prospering*.

Think not that I mean to condemn the *Temperaments* of a wise and discreet *Prudence*, which does not appear to encourage Men in their *Prejudices*, but to fix them more *firmly* in the Ways of *Rule* and *Duty*. I know that *Sincerity* loves not that it's Defenders should be indiscreet and rash: I know that the *Passions* of Men require Caution and Consideration—that they are
Maladies

Maladies of such a Nature—as to make it oftentimes necessary to cure the Patient in a Manner even *unknown* to *himself*: I am convinced that the grand Rule of *Zeal* in this important Matter—is Prudence and Charity. What we are *here* lamenting is—that so many Men should make a *Science* and even an *Honour* of Artifice and Diffimulation. Thus not knowing what Sincerity is *themselves*—they know not how to suppose it to exist in *others*: It is *their* deep Corruption of Thought, which renders the Sincerity and the Resolution of *good Men* *suspected* by them: It is a Disposition which appears to them romantic and ridiculous because that it is so great a Novelty; and as they find in it so much *Singularity*—they chuse to believe that it is Pride or Extravagance—and not *Virtue*.

Hence it happens, that we not only disguise the Truth, but openly betray it. This is the last Kind of Diffimulation exercised
by

by the Scribes and Elders—a Dissimulation of downright Falshood.

They do not content themselves in quoting the Prophets in Terms obscure and equivocal: Not seeing the three eastern Sages to return to *Jerusalem*—they add (without Doubt to quiet *Herod*) that these Astrologers ashamed not to have found the new *King*, *dared* not to appear in *Jerusalem* again—that they were Strangers but little versed in the Knowledge of the Law and the Prophets—and that the Light from Heaven which they pretended to *obey*, was only a vulgar Illusion, and the superstitious Prejudice of a gross and credulous Nation. And it was very artful in the Scribes and Elders to maintain this Language to *Herod*; because they themselves acted agreeably to it, in not going to *Beth-lehem* to seek their new born King, and in persuading *Herod* that there was more of

Credulity

Credulity than of *Truth* in the superstitious Research of the wise Men.

See then what we, at Length, arrive at! *Obliged*, as it were, to humour the Passions of Mankind, and to please them at the Expence of *Truth*—we at last *openly renounce* the Truth: As soon as *it* incommodes us—exposes us—places us behind a Cloud—renders us disagreeable to the World—*then* we *openly disavow* it; we profess to know nothing at all of it—we give it up to Oppression and Injustice. Thus we form for *ourselves* an *Heart* cowardly and servile, to which the *useful Lie* is henceforth a *Virtue*—an *Heart artificial* and *pliant*, which assumes *all* Forms, and which is never fixed to any *one* Point—an *Heart* so corrupted and selfish, as to make to serve it's *own Purposes*—Religion, Integrity, Justice, and every Thing holden sacred amongst Men. Happy *that* People, amongst whom, Men
of

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of this Character and Complexion are seldom to be found.

I have only to observe by Way of Application—that it behoves us to take Care, that in attempting to defend the *Truth* and to prove ourselves Men of *Integrity*—we do not *defend* the *Illusions* of our own *peculiar* Temper. Pride, Ignorance, Infatuation, have *ever* been seen to give to *Error*—Champions as *intrepid* and as *resolute*—as *those* whom the Christian Faith so much and so justly glories in. The only Point of Integrity worthy of our Love, of our Zeal, and of our Fortitude—is that which Christianity *plainly* marks out to us: It is for *that alone* which we ought to suffer the Loss of *all* Things: In other Cases, we are Martyrs *only* to our own Obstinacy and Vanity. Let us then endeavour to honour this *eternal Truth* by a Sanctity of Manners: Let us *ever oppose* it—to Error and Vanity: Let us strive to annihilate in our
Hearts

Hearts those worldly Fears, which respect *Vice* equally with the *Person* who *commits it*: Let us *ever* be *ashamed* to become a *feeble* Reed which is *turned* by *every* *Wind* that blows—but *never* be known to *blush* in carrying *Integrity* written upon our *Foreheads*, as a *Title* the most *exalted*, and as a *Mark* the most *expressive*, by which we can glorify *God*, and regard and benefit *Mankind*.

S E R M O N X.

U P O N

The natural DESIRE of LONG LIFE.

P R E A C H E D A T

ST. MARY LE BOW, on SUNDAY,
OCTOBER 29, 1769.

SERMON X.

S E R M O N X.

J O B xlii. 16.

*After this lived Job an hundred and forty
Years, and saw his Sons and his Sons'
Sons, even four Generations.*

NATURAL is the Desire of long
Life. Job indeed may at first
Sight appear as an Instance to the
contrary, who often wished for Death but
it came not—who digged for it more than
for hidden Treasures. Many others like-
wise have done the same I suppose; but
upon Examination we shall generally find

L

that

that such Wishes have been issued forth in the Spirit of *Passion*, not in the cooler Moments of Reflection. At *best* this Conduct is but *Cowardice*, and in *general* it is *sinful*. Cowardice it certainly was even in *Job*, severe as his Trials were; but as to the *Rest* of Mankind, their *Cause* of Complaint is, for the most Part, so *inadequate* to the Complaint *itself*, that when Men *thus* wish to die on Account of their *Troubles* and *Disappointments*—they doubtless sin greatly, and may justly expect as a Punishment for their Rashness—an Addition to their Misfortunes and Sorrow.

We seldom desire to die, when Life goes on agreeably; only when our Expectations are frustrated, and when Trouble is nigh at Hand. We never hear *even a Job* crying out, “my Soul is weary of my Life”—after the Lord was pleased to turn his Captivity, and to give him twice as much as he had before.

To

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To what then shall we impute this strong Desire of living to be old? To the general Pleasures of human Life? Or to the *peculiar* Pleasures which old Age brings along with it? To it's superiour Virtue—Dignity, and Experience? That it disqualifies us for the idle and vicious Entertainments of younger Life, and teaches us (in order to consult our own Mortality) to visit the Tombs of those of our Friends and Acquaintance, who have long since suffered Corruption? Do we *wish* to live *long* from a pleasing Attention to a rising Progeny? Or lastly, does not the natural *Desire* of *living*—proceed principally from the natural *Fear* of *dying*? This *Fear* I think equally *natural*, with this *Desire*—inso-much that I never wish to recommend or experience (as a mortal Being) a *philosophical* Contempt of Death. In *this* World I own that *Death* has its *Sting*, the *Grave* it's *Victory*. When indeed we have shot the

Gulph and finished *well*, the triumphant Exclamations—O Death where is thy Sting! O Grave where is thy Victory! will happily become us—but not *before*. I have been *here* speaking as a *Man*—yet, I trust, not *foolishly*.

But suppose we now make brief Inquiry into the Nature of old Age, and mark out Means by which it may become light and easy to be borne, and revered also by the generous Part of Mankind.

The just Creator of all Things—though he suffered Man to fall, and to be ever *capable* of falling during his Existence in this World; though he has ordained that Man shall be *born* in *Sorrow* and permits the Commission of so much Evil, that without great Care he may *live and die also* in *Sorrow*; has, nevertheless, amply provided Man with Instruments of Defence against all the Mischiefs which can possibly happen to him. In *every Part* of Life this is apparently

parently the Case, yea, in the *extremest* old Age the Reflection is infallibly true. But would it not be censuring the Deity to imagine otherwise? To imagine that he has given us Powers to *combat* against *other* Parts of Life, and yet leaves us *defenceless* in the last Act of it? It cannot be. Let not aged Persons expect the Strength, nor thirst after the Pleasures of their younger Days: Age is to be regarded for, and to be made easy and comfortable by Means of it's superior Virtue—Dignity—and Experience. Indolence and Insensibility are, I will allow, often to be found in aged Minds, but old Age *itself* must never be considered as *necessarily* inactive. Let us reflect (with *Cicero*) that Business of the highest Concern to Society—is not transacted by bodily Velocity, or Power of Constitution, but by Counsel and experimental Judgment: Upon which Account, Age is most fit to advise. In younger Persons there is confessedly an

unlimited Desire of Novelty—a Desire of altering (at all Events) what has been done before; which Propensity too frequently begets Rashness; Whereas *Age* being no longer subject to the headstrong Passions of *Youth*—is less liable to have it's Judgment or it's Reason *perverted*. How many Instances have we in History—within our own Knowledge indeed—of those who have passed a quiet—an useful—an *engaging* old Age?

Happy and highly to be honoured surely are those venerable Characters who are free from Moroseness and Peevishness—but especially from *Avarice*. How common these Imperfections are to this *Æra* of Man's Life—need not be observed; It may be necessary indeed to *insist*—that where they are to be found *predominant*, it is owing to the Consequences of Habit and indulged Custom, not to the *unavoidable* Consequences of the State *itself*. As to a *small Degree* of Moroseness

Moroseness and Peevishness, we must, in some Measure, excuse it: Old Age, conscious of it's own Decay, is apt to be suspicious. Where there is any Fortune to leave behind, it imagines (and often with too much Reason) that it's Heirs shew an *improper* Anxiousness for the *Inheritance*; and where there is nothing to bequeath—being unavoidably the Cause of some Trouble, and of Course in the Way—it concludes that it is considered as an Incumbrance, and that the final Period of it's Existence is *impatiently* expected. Now to a Mind the least susceptible of Generosity or even common Tenderneſs—these Reflections must needs be exceedingly hurtful; nor should the World be too severe, if in this Case old Age betrays *sometimes* a Want of Chearfulness, and shews itself somewhat peevish and morose. As to *Avarice* in aged Persons, it is surely *altogether* without Excuse. What? When we have but a *little*

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Way to go, shall we upon this Account become the *more* careful to procure the Luxuries of a *long Journey*? Or because we have but *little Breath* within us, shall we exercise this in a greedy Anxiousness for the lavish Provision of a whole Life?

Here then let us consider our Subject in a religious Light, and discourse old Age upon the *moral* Act of dying. Methinks I see grey Hairs with all the Infirmities of Age —startling at the Sound of Death. Yet why art thou so terrified, *good* old Man? Does he answer, “ why callest thou me *good*? I am *not* good?” Nay, but thou desirest long Life, and God has been pleased to grant it thee: Thou didst not surely *wish* for this, *merely* to fill up a greater Measure of *Iniquity* against the Hour of thy *Departure*? “ No; but I am unwilling to die “ —unwilling to believe that the Warning “ given to me by my trembling Nerves—
will

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“will prove so very short.” But why? Thy very *Entrance* upon *old Age* was a kind and pressing Invitation to thee to provide for the Grave; and every Day since should have been considered by thee as a still further Indulgence of Nature; inso-much that come Death when it will—thou shouldest be ready to depart. * Young Men appear indeed to die, as when the Violence of a Flame is suppressed by the superiour Force of Water; but as to *old Age* like *thine*—it drops, as it were, *spontaneously* into the Grave: Nor should such an aged Person murmur, any more than the Husbandman after a plentiful Harvest—at the Approach or Arrival of Autumn. But continues the hoary Character before us—“the Truth is—I am afraid to die.” Yet whence arises this Fear? from *Nature* or from Sin? “From *both*.” Unhappy old

* CICERO DE SENECTUTE.

Man!

Man! How absurd have been thy Wishes for long Life! What Advantage has it been to thee to see thy Sons, and thy Sons Sons—even four Generations, perhaps, go before thee, since thou thyself *now shudderest* at the Sight of Death? What has been thy Employment? Where—thy Reason?—that in *so many* Years thou hast made *no Defence* against this King of Terrors. In a Moment—unable to reply—he dies—looking as if he heard the Voice of his angry Judge proclaiming it through Heaven and Earth—“he dies, and let his aged Name for ever perish.”

Suppose we fancy next another hoary Character in View, *christianly* expecting his Departure, *merely* from *extreme* old Age. Hear him then before he retires, to be no more seen. “I confess myself to have been
 “one of those who *wish* for long Life;
 “God has graciously given it to me, and
 “I trust that I have made a *real* Blessing
 “of

" of it. But to effect this, I always knew
 " that it was necessary to *bring the Means*
 " of Happiness *with me into the State*, not
 " to expect that the *State itself* would in-
 " fallibly furnish me with them. On the
 " Contrary, I must have seen in *others* the
 " *Wretchedness* of old Age, when they have
 " entered upon it without *one* Defence
 " against it's Inconveniencies; I ever con-
 " sidered that a regular and upright *Youth*
 " could alone qualify me for an happy *old*
 " *Age*: I have far exceeded my threescore
 " Years and ten, yet believe that if I had
 " lived much longer than I have—I should
 " never have *repented me* of mine old Age:
 " My *approaching* Dissolution *troubleth* me
 " as a *Man*—yet as a *Christian* I am *more*
 " than *comforted*: The *intervening* Passage
 " has it's *natural* Horrors—it is a *bitter*
 " Cup, and I *must* drink thereof; yet in
 " undergoing this *special* Exigency of Na-
 " ture I feel myself *more* than Conqueror.

“ Q

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“ O happy Hour, when I hope to be united to that divine Company, who are enjoying perfect Bliss in the eternal Heavens! To those especially of my own Friends and Kindred—nay of mine own pious Offspring, whom even to the fourth Generation I have lived to see descend into their Graves.” Having thus spoken—let us suppose this venerable and christian Father to expire with all the Prospects of the happiest Immortality: Fancy him received into the Arms of his Saviour, and the Angels administering to him the transcendent Joys of Heaven.

Our Subject being of so tender and so interesting a Nature, I hope that a short Application more *immediately* to *ourselves* will prove both useful and agreeable.

What then are *our* Thoughts of long Life? Do we join the *Generality* of Mankind in *wishing* to *arrive* at it? If we do; that we may never repent of our Choice—

let

let us be influenced by the Example last represented—to go as early as we can, and do likewise. But the Arguments on both Sides *duly* considered; he is the *wiser* Man, perhaps, who *wishes to retire*—before Nature *leads him Home*. I can conceive it to be very possible for us to be *richly fraught* with *Virtue* and worldly Prosperity when we enter upon *old Age*, and yet to *suffer greatly* even from a Tenderness of Disposition. As *Thought* and *Reflection* are the *proper* Entertainments of *this* State, how may an Affection for our deceased Friends *break in* upon our *Cheerfulness*! Again; altho' our *own* Lives may bear reflecting upon—yet it will almost *necessarily* happen, that *some* amongst the Number of those whom we loved *best*—were unfortunate—either in their moral Conduct—in their Commerce and Engagements with the World—or in the *untimely* Manner of their Death. It is not unlikely
that

that *Job himself*, blessed as he was with so remarkable an old Age, and however qualified for it his great Perfection of Character had made him; it is not unlikely, I say, that even *Job himself* was sometimes wholly unmindful of the Blessings of this Season of his Life, by taking into tender Consideration the unhappy Fate of his former Children.

And after all—tho' long Life should prove a natural Desire—let it be remembered—that such Wish is granted but to few. Our infant State is attended with a Variety of Circumstances which continually threaten Dissolution; and when we are grown to Maturity, we are oftentimes seized so violently, and cured with so much Difficulty—that it appears a Wonder almost—that any of us should live to be old. Let us then learn not to desire it—at least, not to expect it. And indeed—if we even set aside the Precariousness of the Tenure by which

which we hold all temporal Advantages; yet our Hopes as Christians after Death, and the Difficulties which we unavoidably meet with Here being seriously weighed and considered — there seems to be no *real* Foundation for the *Desire* of living *long*. Nor do I think a Man justified in his *Desire* of *dying*, especially when he makes Troubles and Disappointments, or even *Pain itself* — the *Cause* of *such* Desire. When the Mind is heavily oppressed, or the Body racked with Pain — the Soul is apt, I will allow, to cry out for the Wings of a Dove, that it might flee away and be at Rest: Still, it is the Duty of the *Christian* to inform the *Man* — that he errs in *thus* wishing to forsake his Standard, till God thinks fit to send the Summons, and order his Dismission. And it may here be very proper to remark, that when a murmuring Spirit has once taken possession of us — we are disposed to see

all

all Objects in a disagreeable Light—to be out of Humour with human Nature in general from our own particular Feelings and Sufferings—and to insist as Madmen and Brutes rather than as Christians—that “the Day of Death is better than the Day “of one’s Birth.”

The true Spirit of Christianity respecting the Matter in Question is clearly this—Neither to wish for *Life* nor for *Death*—to be *grateful* for *Life* whilst we *can* enjoy or preserve it; and to be ready with *equal Gratitude* to deliver it up—when Nature shall become *irreparable*, or when the God of Nature manifestly calleth for it. This Disposition happily implies a *moral Preparation* for *old Age*, if God should be pleased to bestow upon us *such* Length of Days: Or should he ordain *otherwise*—that we be cut off *sooner*, even in the *Prime* of *Life*; yet I will hope that from *this christian* Readiness to *depart*, we should be found

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found *equally preparing* for an *happy Eternity*. And upon Reflection, we could not be injured surely—in being made *so early*—meet Partakers of the Kingdom of Heaven.

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SERMON XI.

UPON

The Folly and Danger of despising
RELIGION.

PREACHED

Before their MAJESTIES, on SUNDAY,
MAY 31, 1772.

THE K. M. O. N. XI.

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The Fifth and Sixth of January
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S E R M O N X I .

I T H E S S . iv . 8 .

*He therefore that despiseth—despiseth not.
Man—but God.*

THE Apostle, in his usual—*affec-*
tionate Manner, is here exhorting
the *Theſſalonians* to proceed in the
Ways of Godlineſs—that they live holily
and juſtly, and in chriſtian Love and Cha-
rity one with another; informing them,
that he who deſpiſeth in theſe eſſential
Points, deſpiſeth not *Man* — but *God* —
God, the confeſſed Author and Patron of

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all true *Religion*, and solid, substantial *Virtue*.

But as it will ever be right, perhaps, to apply a Discourse of this Kind as soon as we can—I shall now take Leave of the *Thessalonians*, and address myself to the Christians of *later* Ages in the Language of the Text—He that despiseth—despiseth not *Man*—but *God*.

“ One would be almost led to imagine,
 “ that some Men objected to Christianity,
 “ because it has confirmed every *Hope*,
 “ every *Expectation* of *Nature*,” and made
secure to us—the warmest Wishes of the
 human Heart. “ *Nature*, with unutterable
 “ Groans, pants after *Immortality*: Weep-
 “ ing she sees her Children drop into their
 “ Graves;” because all *beyond* the Grave
 appears to her—*puzzling* and *uncertain*—
 a Land too *extensive* for her Knowledge—
 too *deep* for her Researches: When her
 Thoughts attempt to traverse *Eternity*
 through

thro' all it's *variegated* Paths—"now she
 " *hopes*—now again—she *fears*;" and thus
 agitated by the *Vicissitude* of these *opposite*
 Passions—she finds no *firm*, no *solid* Ground
 whereon to *rest* herself—languid, and wea-
 ried out by *vain* and *fruitless* Wanderings.
 How *different* the Prospect which the
 Gospel affords! Here we may view the
heavenly Canaan—the *new Jerusalem*—that
 Place of many happy Mansions, prepared
 for wise and obedient Souls, departed in the
 Lord. Nay, *so great* a Friend is Christi-
 anity to *human* Nature—that it's Concern
 reaches even to our more *ignoble* Part—the
Body; and not only during this Life, but
 to it's Recovery from all the *Dishonours* of
 the Grave—to Glory, and Honour, and
 Immortality.

"Whoever therefore can *profess* to vilify
 "these *happy* and *important* Truths, and
 "to represent them in a *ridiculous* Light—
 "he not only fixes certain Reproach and

“ Infamy upon *himself*—he not only shews
 “ himself to be a *slight* and *careless* Ob-
 “ server—but is in *Fact* (whatever his *In-*
 “ *tentions* may be; whether to gratify a
 “ *trifling* Humour—to display the *Archness*
 “ of his Genius—or *designedly* to corrupt
 “ the Morals of the *Age*.) Such an one is
 “ in *Fact* and of *Necessity*—an *Enemy* to
 “ *Society*, and the *general* Happiness of
 “ Mankind.”

That Men are but too apt to indulge a
Propensity at least—to a *Taste* of this Kind,
 nay and to conduct their Lives *accordingly*
 —you will, I dare say, with *me*, be ready
 to acknowledge. But that we may not ap-
 pear morose and cynical—let us allow, that
 even *Levity itself*, in *some* Cases, may be
seasonable, and *safely* exercised by the *wisest*
 and the *best* of Men: Still, altho’ human
 Nature cannot at *all* Times attend to the
 Contemplation of *serious* Things—such as
God and *Eternity*; let every Man be wise
 and

and prudent enough *never* to make *Sport* of these *awful* Considerations, so indeed as *intirely* to lose Sight of them in his *Practice*. Again, *Cbearfulness* has *always* been esteemed a *social* Virtue; and even *Raillery* is *sometimes* a pleasant Entertainment to *most* of us: Yet it behoves every man to chuse Subjects proper for Raillery; else he shews a *wrong Judgment*—and makes his *Wit* and *Cleverness*—Folly and Impertinence: This is as *offensive* to Men of *Reason*, as the Conversation of one who thinks it a Crime to *smile*—is (for the most Part) *dull* and *disagreeable*: However fond any Man may be of a *Joke*—he should take Care, even to be commended as a *Companion*—that such Joke be well *founded* and well *timed*; and as a *Christian* and good Member of Society—*never* to give Way to Jestings upon *solemn* Matters, or upon *solemn* Occasions.

But

But what must we think of a Man, whose *Reason* is employed as a public *Advocate* for Vice and Irreligion? “Who “*professedly* endeavours to set off the *Shame* “and *Misery* of human Nature with false and *delusive Charms*?” Not only to be an *Infidel himself*, but to *labour* to make the *Rest* of Mankind become *Infidels* also.— Not only to practice Vice *himself*, but to *approve* it *afterwards*, and to *recommend* it to the *World*.—O is it *possible*, that the Mind of Man, so capable of Exaltation, should ever *thus* have sunk itself!

As much, however, as Men of this Stamp may disturb the Quiet of the Community in which they live by their *open Profession* of Vice and Irreligion—yet the *Contempt* of the Matter, in which the *Pleasure* and the *Wit* are supposed *chiefly* to consist—the *Contempt*, I say, is levelled at *God*: He that *thus* despiseth—despiseth not *Man*, but *God*. And let us consider, that if the
Principles

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Principles of Christianity should *happen* to be true; "the Man, who has so grossly
 "abused his Reason, as to employ it against
 "his *Maker*, and *all* that is amiable and
 "useful in human Life"—must surely
 expect to be finally treated with inconceiv-
 able Rigour and Severity. Let such an
 one suppose the insulted Redeemer of the
 World to direct a *secret* Arrow to his Heart
 whilst he is pouring forth Blasphemy; or
 let him only suppose those of his own flat-
 tering Community to attend him upon a
 dying Bed, "and to endeavour to banish his
 "Fears by the Relation of some *lucicrous* and
 "prophane Story;" yet how does he fancy
 that he should be *able* to *receive* it? Per-
 haps, instead of listening to these vile De-
 ceivers, and in Spite of all his former
 Infidelity—he will *now* cry out, in a Kind
 of Delirium—what shall I *do* to be *saved*?
 And *despairing* of Salvation, extend *this*
 Cry

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Cry—to the Mountains to *fall* upon him,
and to the Hills to *cover* him.

I will hope to be indulged with your still
further Attention.

Far be it from me to recommend a
Wildness in Religion—or to contend for
Refinements *above* this World, or human
Nature. The Christian Religion even *en-
joineth* us to *use* this World, so that we do
but always shew by our Belief and Con-
duct, that we have something *more noble*,
something *more excellent*, which engages our
principal Attention: The Christian Religion
by no Means consists of one continued
Course of Severities and Hardships, thus
excluding Men from *all* the Comforts of
Life, and dooming them, as it were, to an
absurd and perpetual *Melancholy*: No; the
Christian Religion is of a *cheerful* Nature,
and *embellishes* and *improves* the Blessings of
Prosperity—whilst it affords a never-failing
Comfort

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Comfort—adequate to the *severest* Dispensations.

To see then such a Religion as this—neglected and *despised*—must needs be *painful* to every one, who calleth himself a *Christian*—to every one indeed, who calleth himself a *Man*. We may be fully assured that the Christian Religion ought to be our happiest Consideration: “*It is certainly our chief Honour and Dignity—the only Source of inward Satisfaction, and the Basis and Support of social Good:*” Added to all this—it affords us the most transcendent Prospects in *another* Life. To submit therefore to the *Tenets* of *this* Religion as far as we are able—is not only meet and right, but the Height of Prudence also: On the other Hand, to profess an *open* Rebellion against all it's Precepts, is surely not only *inconceivably* criminal, but also *inconceivable* Folly: For we are here to be informed, that it is God who *promiseth* all the Blessings of Religion

gion, and not Man, who (at best) is only God's *Embassadour* in this Case: It is God too, who *alone* can fulfil *such Promises*. Since then to God should be given *Thanks* for these *noble Privileges* of our *Nature*; so by *Parity* of Reasoning, if we turn a *deaf Ear* to them, and *despise* them—let us not think that we hereby *degrade* a *Fellow-Creature* who may have been our *friendly Monitor*—for the *Contempt* is (*strictly speaking*) thrown upon God. On this Account it behoves us to be always very *cautious* of giving *hard Names* to good *Instructions*; and seeing the Christian Religion in particular so manifestly *wiseth* us *well*—what *serious* Man would *venture*, and what *wise* Man would even *wish* to *represent* it—as “ the Effect of *Priestcraft*, combined “ with the *Cunning* of *Statesmen* and *Politicians*—with a *View* to *enslave* and *impoverish* the Rest of Mankind.

When

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When Men are inclined to give Way to a *ludicrous Turn of speaking or writing*—there are *Subjects enough* to be found in the *World*, without engaging in *Religion*. It is really so shocking to make *this* the Matter of *ridicule*, that I could conceive a Man to be guilty of *almost every Vice* under the Sun, and yet shudder at the *Thought only of ridiculing*—a *God*—*Eternity*—*Salvation*.

As *great Sinners* as Men may be—yet let them (at least) confess that they are doing *wrong*: As *little* as they may believe that they should be made *happy Hereafter* by a *contrary Conduct*; yet let them (at least) forbear from *despising* or treating with *unbecoming Levity*—the divine and benevolent Hand, which professes to offer *this Happiness* to them.

We, I trust, have taken Care to keep at the *utmost Distance* from a Crime so very hurtful to *cool Reasoning*—and to the Nature and Expectations of our *better Part*—

the

the *Soul*. I will hope that *our* Conduct in Life has *also* been (upon the Whole) *becoming those* who are *persuaded* that they shall live in a *future State*, and who *fully* believe in *future Rewards and Punishments*; and that even with Regard to those Vices and Imperfections to which we may be *severally* addicted—let me *hope likewise*, that we are always *serious* and *generous* enough to *own*—that we *wish* we were *without* them; and that the *yielding* to them—requires some Concession to *that God*, if not to *that World*, against whom they are committed.

And when *Religion* is the Subject of *our Conversation or Correspondence*—I am willing to think that we *faithfully* defend *all* Points “ which describe *Virtue* in it’s *proper* Beauty and Lustre, and strip *Vice* of “ those *artificial* Ornaments which hide it’s “ *natural* Horror and Infamy: That we “ *strongly* recommend the Exercise of Justice,

“ tice, Truth, and Benevolence—and in-
 “ *genuously* expose the *Mischiefs* of loose and
 “ ungoverned *Passions*: That we can, in a
 “ Word, at all Times trace the Footsteps
 “ of God’s stupendous Wisdom and un-
 “ bounded Goodness—in the Works of his
 “ Creation—in the Conduct of his Provi-
 “ dence—and in the wonderful Scheme of
 “ our Redemption.”

These are, doubtless, refined and exalted Speculations—the noblest Entertainment to our rational Faculties: And whilst we engage *thus* on the Side of *Religion*, we shall never suffer ourselves to be *bantered* out of our *Duty*; but shall always have Security *at Hand* against the most dangerous *Delusions*, which could *essentially* affect our *Happiness*—and may in our Lord’s own Sense of the Expression, be *hereby* said to have chosen that *good Part*—which shall *never* be taken from us.



S E R M O N XII.

U P O N

The P E N I T E N T upon the C R O S S.

P R E A C H E D A T

St. L U K E's, O L D S T R E E T, o n S U N D A Y,
J U L Y 3, 1774.

XII. MON. 2



S E R M O N X I I .

LUKE xxiii. 42, 43.

*And he said unto Jesus—Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom:
And Jesus said, Verily I say unto thee—to Day shalt thou be with me—in Paradise.*

I HAVE chosen for our present Meditation—the striking Example of the Penitent upon the Cross. A pleasing—a truly comfortable Scene this—to every sincere, *practical Believer*: But what a Misfortune is it—that Men should build such a Confidence on the Acceptance of this Penitent—as appears manifestly incon-

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sistent with the Word of God, and the immutable Conditions of Salvation! I must therefore desire your *particular* Attention, whilst I state this Matter to you in a clear and reasonable Light.

To grant at once the Whole that can be contended for with Regard to the Penitent himself—we will allow that his Salvation was *begun* and *completed* at the *Cross*. Still, how much more equitable was *his* Plea of Acceptance, than any which the *Christian of these Days* can make, who cries out for Salvation *only* at the very Gate of Eternity! How justly might *he* have lamented (as, probably, he *did* lament) the Unhappiness of a whole Life spent in the dark Mazes of Ignorance and Error—destitute of a Guide to direct him—and without the slightest Conception of a Christ or his Gospel! Nay, might he not, with some Degree of Reason, *modestly* have asked of God, why such Blessings had been *denied* him?

Not

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Not indeed to *censure* the *Almighty*, but to make *his own Case* the *more affecting*: Not indeed to *command* Acceptance, but by *thus* addressing the Compassion of God—*earnestly* to *beg* it. And could divine Mercy do less than receive him? We will suppose that he was a *Stranger* even to the *Name* of *Jesus*, till he met *Him* at the Cross: Did he not then *believe*—as soon as he knew what was required of him *to believe*? Did he not *repent*—as soon as he knew what the Nature of *Christian* Repentance *was*?

But if we suppose otherwise, and that divine Mercy was exercised with *manifest Partiality* towards this repenting Malefactor: Yet even in this Case, no Encouragement can be given to the Rest of Mankind from such an Example. Infinite Holiness and a condemned Criminal were going to be crucified *together*: This was an Event which never happened *before*, nor ever is to

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happen again: The *Singularity* therefore of the Occasion puts *the Rest of Mankind* entirely out of the Question; and the *Greatness* of the Occasion *even more* than pleaded for the *Acceptance* of this *repenting Malefactor*: For what could be so striking an Intercession in his Favour — “as for him to leave the World—with the God and Saviour of it?”

Do Men, however, still insist — that a like Acceptance of the Penitent before us is offered to *every* expiring penitential *Christian*? For a Moment we will suppose this, and even set aside the Possibility of *sudden* Death. Yet here let Mankind recall to their Memories the mournful Example of the *impenitent* Thief. This Man had all the Advantages which his Companion *had*; and yet wanted even the Inclination to accept them: And how many Instances of this perverse and relentless Kind must we have heard of — amongst those unhappy
Wretches

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Wretches, who have suffered at the fatal Tree! I am afraid too, that in the Course of my own Ministry—I have seen some of my Fellow Creatures so *hardened* and so *impenitent* upon a *dying Bed*—as to be *resolved* not to sue for a *Pardon*—by only crying out—Lord, Lord.

Again, how apt are *all* Men (however aged, however infirm, however afflicted with Pain and Disease) to flatter themselves with the Thought of a *Recovery*, or that Nature will hold out *a little longer*. Now upon our present *supposed* Plan of Salvation, how likely will *bad* Men be to take such an Advantage of it, as to postpone the *short* and *easy* Work of their intended Conversion, till it be even *too late* to put it into Execution! The penitent Thief (ignominious as his Mode of dying was) became happy in this *great Particular*—that the *Certainty* of his *Death* made his *Repentance* also *sure*—allowed him no idle
Evasions

Evasions—no *deluding* Prospects of a *more convenient* Season.

But I have an Argument to introduce next, which I think must very powerfully alarm the more wicked and sinful Part of an Audience. I would wish you then to reflect—that this repenting Malefactor brought with him to his Cross or Death-Bed—Senses perfect—Reason calm and sober—and withal a Body free from Pain and Sickness: Whereas how often do *other* dying Persons labour under Pains and Diseases so acute and so severe—that what pronounces them *human*—is their *Shape only*. Now instead of knowing, instead of being able to become *reconciled* to their Redeemer at such a Time as this—their own nearest Family Friend, perhaps, may be standing by their Bed-Side as a Figure *strange* and *indifferent*—if not *ghastly* and *perplexing* to them.

Suppose

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Suppose then that the wicked Man is allowed every Advantage conceivable either from *Nature* or the Example of the *penitent* Thief; still, his Situation, when he comes to die, may prove an unhappy, because a dangerous, one. If he should be *hardened* — (insensible of his Crimes, and careless of what may happen to him hereafter) — then he will be sure to die like the *impenitent* upon the Cross: And if he should have the Power and the *Inclination* to reflect — yet he will perceive it a difficult Task, in a dying State, so to employ and manage his Thoughts, as to render himself *fit* either for *this* World or the *next*.

But, surely, the Case of the penitent Thief, and *that* of any other dying Person, born and educated under the christian Dispensation, are so *vastly different* — that it is Impiety itself to suppose that their final Acceptance *can* (upon any Terms) ever prove the *same*. The Means of Happiness *so long*
denied

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denied to the *one*, have been *offered* to the *other* from the *Moment* that he was capable of distinguishing *Right* from *Wrong*: As soon as the Door of Mercy was open to receive the *one*—he piously and gratefully sought Admission: Whereas the Door of Mercy was *always* open to receive the *other*—till by his own impious Presumption he shut it against *himself*. Nothing, I fear, but *extraordinary Grace* can save such a Man as *this*; and whether he who has throughout Life called himself a Christian without having the *Faith* of a Christian—or who in *Profession* has been a Disciple of *Christ*, and in his *Conduct* the manifest Disciple of a *different Master*; whether, I say, this Man, becoming a true Believer and a sincere Penitent even at the *Close* of the eleventh Hour—can be thought an Object *deserving* of extraordinary Interposition—let any one in his Senses determine. I will only venture to add—that if it should be
the

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the Design of God *finally* to restore the *most flagrant* Sinners after *this Manner*; the Gospel Injunctions are but of *little Use*, and the Virtues and consistent Piety of good Christians but of *small Advantage*: But, beloved, be not deceived, for God will not *thus* be mocked.

Happiest of Reflections surely — that *Christ* came into the World and died for Sinners—and that he now sitteth at the right Hand of his Father as Mediator between God and fallen Man! Upon this kind Redeemer of ours let us *all* depend, as Salvation cometh from none other. The best Men upon Earth cannot *claim* Forgiveness or eternal Happiness upon the Score of their own Merit: But altho' they cannot *demand* this, as having offered to God *perfect* Innocence, or Things of *equal Value*; yet it is but reasonable to expect that a just Creator will accept their *good Works*, and reward them *accordingly*. Indeed the very
Term

Term Mediation implies *some Merit*, at least *some extenuating Circumstances* in the Conduct of the Person or Persons pleaded for ; and likewise a *Doubt* of Acceptance. Unless therefore we can furnish *Christ* our divine Intercessor with *some Merit*, or some extenuating Circumstances, on which he may *found* an *Intercession*——presumptuous, I think, is the Resolve to *ask* it of him ; nor do I see that *Christ* would deviate from *his Character*—if he *refused* to *mediate* in such a Case as *this* ; nor God from *his*—was he even to *reject* the *Mediation*.

Here then let me mention the strange Inconsistency of some even of the worst of Men—in sending for their Ministers just at the *Close* of Life ; only to make us Witnesses of their *mock Faith* and *mock Conversion*, and to implore the Sanction of the Church for Hopes of a final Acceptance with God, as *happy* as *that* of the Penitent
upon

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upon the Cross. There is, doubtless, no Care more deeply incumbent upon God's Ministers—than to deal *charitably* with Souls upon the Wing for Eternity : But we are to *remember*—that we must deal *faithfully also* ; must *so* order our *Counsels* and *Expressions*—as to cause *no* sick Man to *depart*—either in a *vain Hope*, or in a *flattering* and *delusive Peace*. Would Men indeed live—at least in a *Kind* of *Preparation* for another and a *better* World—we should *then* be *pleased* to attend their Death Beds ; and our *Visits*, instead of striking *them* with *Horror*, and *painfully affecting* our own *Tenderness*, would *comfort* their departing Souls : And surely you must think—that *satisfactory* is the Task—when we *can* from the *general* Rectitude of the sick Man's *past Life*, (and *consequently* from the *Word* of God) with Safety *pronounce* his Peace *solid*—and his Hope of Happiness *certain*.

I hope

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I trust that you see the Force of this Manner of Reasoning. To preach—and not to preach to the *Understandings* as well as to the *Passions* of Mankind—must *ever* be preaching to *no* Purpose—or what is still *worse*—to a *bad* Purpose. I shall therefore close the whole, with this salutary and *friendly* Advice.

Lay not the *least* Stress upon the Acceptance of the Penitent upon the Cross: It cannot possibly afford any of *us* the *least* happy Protection. If you really mean to partake of christian Salvation—be mindful of it—whilst it may be called—to Day. Remember that the Night advanceth *apace*, when it may be *too late* either for *you* to *ask*, or for divine Mercy *itself* to *bestow*—*Forgiveness*. The Change—the irresistible Change of Death—will soon take the youngest and the strongest of us from our *favourite* Earth—will soon hurry us to the Judgment Seat of
Christ

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Christ : *There* — will the Sinner (on *Earth*, perhaps, *inflexible*) bestow the *voluntary* Bend : *There* — will Pride (on *Earth*, perhaps, *exulting*) level *itself* with the *very* Dust. Nor would I have you deem *these* the wild Suggestions of *Frenzy* or *Enthusiasm* — but believe *them* to be — what they really are — the Words of *Truth* and *Soberness*. May they *so* operate upon the Minds of *every one* of us — *so* influence our Lives and Conversation — as to induce the dear Redeemer (upon his own obvious and *general* Plan of Salvation) to whisper in our dying Ear — “let not thy Soul — let not thy Soul be dis-quieted within Thee — *to Day* shalt thou be with *me* — in *Paradise*.”

F I N I S.



